Koviloor Acadamy

JIM TRENT

By

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

Author of

"DAUGHTERS OF ISHMAEL"

IMS0696

113

Koviloor Acadamy

JIM TRENT

Koviloor Acadamy

NEW- FICTION

ELECTRIC LOVE 7/6
By Victoria Cross

CHASTITY 7/6
By Joan Conquest

CHRONICLES OF A GIGOLO 7/6
By Julian Swift

BOSTON 10/6
By Upton Sinclair

FLAMES OF VELVET 7/6
By Maurice Dekobra

UP NORTH 7/6
By Capt. T. Lund

NUMBER 56 7/6
By Catulle Mendes

THIS YEAR, NEXT YEAR.... 7/6
By J. W. Drawbell

THE JUNGLE 7/6
By Upton Sinclair

OIL 10/6 and 5/-
By Upton Sinclair

THE CRIMSON SMILE 3/6
By Maurice Dekobra

THE SALE 7/6
By Joan Conquest

T.- WERNER LAURIE, LTD.
26 & 26 Water Lane, London, E.C.4.

Koviloor Acadamy

JIM TRENT

BY

REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

AUTHOR OF "DAUGHTERS OF ISHMAEL," ETC.

IMS0696

LONDON

T. WERNER LAURIE LTD.

24 & 26 WATER LANE, E.C.4

Koviloor Acadamy

TO

FELIX MORLEY

AND

HUGH F. SPENDER

AT LUGANO

First published in Great Britain 1929
All Rights Reserved

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY THE DUNEDIN PRESS, LTD., EDINBURGH.

Koviloor Acadamy

NOTE

WHILE this book was in the making, there was printed in the Philadelphia *Evening Ledger* a paragraph saying that "several well-known radicals appear in 'Jim.'" That statement is absolutely mistaken: there is no person, radical or other, in this novel who, so far as I know, has any prototype in real life.

I do believe that our divorce-courts are hoodwinked by many of the parties that appeal to them. I do believe that many "radicals" make their creed ridiculous by buffoonery, and that others basely use their radicalism as an excuse for moral laziness. But I had no particular divorced persons in mind when I wrote of Charley Vanaman and the woman he married—no particular radicals in mind when I attempted to depict certain faults and foibles in the people with whom Vanaman and his wife came into contact.

General types and modern tendencies I have of course tried to portray; and I have tried, as every honest writer of fiction must, to make my people seem alive as they move across the printed page. Nevertheless, the people as individuals—the wife, her lovers, relatives, friends, acquaintances and enemies—are not intended to be, and are not, portraits of any living individuals; their characters are their own only, and for their deeds, both good and ill, no person in real life may be held accountable.

R. W. K.

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND,

Koviloor Acadamy

JIM TRENT

FIRST CHAPTER

THE faint breeze of an evening in May stirred the curtains of the darkened room. The scent of the season saturated the air; it climbed from the treetops in nearby Central Park and floated over the window-sill. Spring, the oldest, the sweetest, and the subtlest of liars, was at the ear of the world once more, and in the ear of the world was whispering:

"You are still young, and I have made you younger. You can do it all over again. You can begin afresh. *Do* it all over; begin afresh—now!"

The woman in the twilight at the apartment-house window listened to that whisper and believed it, as she had been listening to it and believing it ever since, long weeks before, the first vernal hint of approaching warmth, creeping northward from Carolinian valleys and up the Pennsylvanian waterways, sought a timid foothold in the New York streets. She had listened and planned and acted; and now, it seemed, the moment was arrived to call Spring to his accounting.

Leaning far out of the window, a shadow bending from the shadows of her own house toward the shadows of the street, Mrs Trent assured herself that she was indeed still young, that she was really much younger than her thirty-one years would have permitted another woman to be. And, upon this instance, she did what few young people do, and what Edith Trent had, up to that time, scarcely ever done: she allowed her thoughts to desert the present and the future, and gave them rein to run, albeit with a gentle regard for her own sensibilities, over the arid track of her past.

She could justify that past, and she did justify it. If, at two-and-twenty, she had known more of the world than the twenty-year-old lad whom she then married, the fault surely lay with Jim, who, at twenty, should have had a working knowledge of life. If she had tricked him into that marriage,

Koviloor Acadamy
he was at least willing enough to marry her. If the trick, the assertion of impending motherhood that she had made to him, the lie that she had told him, was soon inevitably confuted, so did she soon discover that Jim's hopes of a substantial inheritance from his aunt were equally ill-founded. She doubted the sincerity of those hopes of his; he ought to have verified them. Edith hated failure; she was sure that, in spite of her deceptions, she had loved and trusted the spirited boy; she was precisely as sure that love and trust could not reasonably be expected to survive when the spirited boy changed into a struggling painter; when, without any apparent hope of success in it, he gave quite half of his affections to an art that his wife did not care to understand.

Her married life had been, she now assured herself, an exceedingly dull combat against impossible odds, and, though the dullness was occasionally relieved by quiet essays beyond the sphere of ideal domesticity that she had chosen, Edith felt satisfied--because she wanted to feel satisfied—that Jim had sought and found variety. At this period of her life she possessed the blessed quality of forgetting whatever she choose to forget, but she could recall George Mertcheson and Tommy Kirkpatrick and Billy Namyna with admirable equanimity. The only things that might disturb her were a few brief letters: one merely incautious letter that she knew Jim somewhere preserved—though she had ransacked all his belongings and could not find it—and two or three others, which she had reason to believe he had secured and somewhere still possessed.

But now——

§ 2. There came at the door of her darkened room the knock for which she had been waiting.

Edith turned: the movement was stealthy, but more quick than stealthy. Impatient as she had been for this summons, its arrival startled her.

"Come in," she said. Except the guest, there was none within earshot, yet she kept her voice low.

The door opened. The shadow that entered the room entered irresolutely.

"Edith?" Its tone was the echo of hers.

"Yes. You're late, Charley." There was annoyance at his tardiness. "Where on earth have you been?"

Nevertheless, the two shadowy figures were embracing.

Koviloor Acadamy
"My father wasn't so well. He kept me. You've got it awful dark here, Edith."

She rested her head on his shoulder with a spontaneity that was the drawing of a curtain upon all memory of like surrenders to other shoulders.

"I know. I've been thinking," she explained; "and I can't think when the light's on."

"Where—where's Jim?"

The name splashed into the twilight. Edith drew away; she returned to her place at the window.

"Sit down here," she said, and indicated a chair beside her own. "He's gone out."

Charley sat down. He had the manner of a man for whom the prevailing twilight was as much mental as physical. He said:

"Why?"

"Because I told him to," said Edith.

"And he went?"

"Of course. He always does what I tell him to: that's one of his ways of making me hate him. I told him I wanted a private talk with you."

She knew that she was young, and she had always been determined. The worst was over: she had faced Jim and forced, as she had so often forced, her will on him. Once, long ago, she had told him that she would have respected him had he ever beaten her; now she was the more bitter because of what she considered the weakness of his compliance in promising to grant her demand for liberty. He had always refused to fight her: he would not fight her now. He would not produce the one letter; his silence regarding the others indicated that he would not produce them. He would not produce anything. As always, he was to give her her way: her acquaintance with those other men, even the circumstances of her marriage to Jim, need never come out in court, need never be confessed to Charley Vanaman. She was not grateful to her husband, but she paid her thanks to the great god Luck for the opportunity to bury all these things before the door of the high last love that the great god Luck had sent her.

For Charley, the purely mental portion of the twilight was joyously lessened by her last statement. Revolving it in a mind that was generally steady, but seldom alert, he chuckled. His chuckles were an inherent part of his conversation, and this one was compact of admiration and surprise.

Koviloor Acadamy
"You certainly don't mind telling Jim what you want," he said.

"It's the only way to deal with him: tell him what you want, but not what you want it for. You know how easy he is." She so despised her husband that she could not speak pleasantly of him, even to his successful rival. She leaned her chin on her hand and her elbow on the sill of the open window. The faint Spring breeze cooled her burning cheeks. "I've had it out with him this time," she added.

§ 3. There it was. For weeks she and Charley had approached this subject, smelled it, quivered, circled, advanced, scampered away, like mice about a bit of cheese that they desire, but fear may bait a hidden trap; like less heroic Cæsars at the Cisalpine river; finally like hunters on whom the quarry turns.

When they talked to each other, this was always in the air. It was always in their minds. Not at first: at first, on that red night when they had plunged into their emotional Rubicon, they thought of nothing save the delectable country on its other side; later, they found they could return to the bank that they had left, and the fields beyond the river were only a pleasant playground. Yet gradually they cared less and less about returning to that nearer bank; gradually they did not want to return to it; gradually they loathed the thought of returning. For many days both felt the loathing, neither mentioning it to the other, but each knowing what the other felt. Then a look, or a sob, something less than a word, made declaration. They shuddered at the necessity of these returnings: why not make return impossible?

Or the figure of the hunter: The thing, upon that declaration, took shape in speech. It was now a hint, now a hope, now a passionate avowal. Charley was fearful and showed it; Edith fearful, but determined. They temporised, because at heart they were conventional, but when they stood still in their pursuit, that which they had pursued turned and attacked them. They had to have it: divorce.

Then the frightful question of means:

"Jim's behaving himself," Edith had said, "just to keep us from what he must guess we want. He is. It's exactly like him to do that. He's a devil. That's his way. Look at how he acts about his salary: he's always given me all of the little money he can make—given it to me as soon as it comes in—

Koviloor Acadamy

simply because he wants to pretend to himself that he's generous when what he's really after is not to have the bother of paying the bills!"

Charley hoped, but wondered. Was she sure that Jim had ever——

Of course she was! The quietness of Jim's character was proof sufficient: its silent surface fairly babbled of depths.

"Unfaithful!" Edith had said, looking past her lover to the imagined figure of Jim. "That's what Jim is: Models! It stands to reason it's so, for ever since you and I got to be friendly (he's never mentioned that we were, of course . . . his way again!)—well, ever since then he's not slept in the bedroom: he's been sleeping alone in the next room—in the studio. And he's a normal man; so you see, it stands to reason."

They had no fear that Jim would himself sue for a divorce and make a scandal. Time was when Charley had thought tremblingly of such a mischance, but Edith, out of her experience of her husband, was bountifully reassuring. Jim, she said, already knew it and had long known it: he did nothing, she was sure, because he probably concluded that they, reckless of notoriety, wanted him to do everything. Jim—that formed her chiefest complaint against him—was not a man to do anything.

There then remained, they thus at last demonstrated, the one course only. Because they could not find what they were convinced existed, they must manufacture its counterfeit; they must "make a case," and, since they were convinced that the reality did indeed somewhere lie hidden—since they argued the punishment deserved—this did not at once strike them as unethical. Surely it would be useless to apply to Jim to furnish them with real evidence: "He," said Edith, "would just pretend he was too chivalrous to give the woman away, whoever she is." Surely again, it would be useless to ask him to supply a fictitious case: "He loves to play at being magnanimous, but this would only give him a chance to say he was no liar." Edith would go boldly to him, tell him that she meant to free herself and count on his absurd pride to answer:

"Very well, if you want to be free of me, you must take the sin of perjury on yourself, but I won't interfere to rob you of its reward."

She had told Charley that she would do this, and he hoped that she would successfully do it, but his was not the sort of

Koviloor Acadamy
mind to previsage. And now, in one of the very rooms in which she lived with Jim, here she was saying through the May twilight that the thing was done:

"I've had it out with him this time."

§ 4. Charley took a deep breath:

"You don't mean——"

"Yes, I do. I told him that I wanted a divorce, that I wanted him to let me get a divorce."

Her lover half rose:

"Did you tell him why?"

"I did. That was one case where I had to give reasons. I said I didn't love him and wanted to marry somebody else."

"Me? Did you say it was me?"

"I didn't have to. You know he understood that. You know he guessed it long ago, even if he never spoke of it. He'd have guessed it sooner than he did if he wasn't so wrapped up in those pictures that he'll never do more than make a living out of them!"

"But if he *has* guessed——" Charley's voice broke. "Do you think I'd better stay here?"

Edith laughed. "What nonsense! You talk as if you were your grandfather. We're living in 1928. Jim isn't. He has to. Doesn't this show I can manage him? Oh, no; he thinks he's so intellectual and superior that he's glad—actually glad—to pose as a philosopher. He wants this thing, because he wants to take it in a way that he believes is lofty. I humoured him in that, and so must you." She broke off sharply: "I'm ashamed to have been married to such a man!"

Charley was silent, and she found his silence provocative.

"Oh, my dear, my dear," she cried, "you can't know what I've had to put up with! Not even you can know. He can make his meanness look like generosity, so as to make his meanness meaner. He can make his cruelty look like kindness, so's it'll hurt more. He fools everybody. There's Bishop Peel. I don't go to church much, but I've heard Bishop Peel preach and he's the cleverest preacher I ever did hear; but Jim could always come close to fooling him."

"At my club," began Charley: he belonged to but one club and was very proud of belonging, "they say——"

Edith, however, had her own opinions.

"Just think of that portrait he painted of me," she said. "He only did it to hurt my feelings. He actually wanted me

Koviloor Acadamy
to pose in the old dressing-gown I wear mornings, and when I wouldn't he painted it in anyhow—called it 'characteristic.' And the face—If that's art! Nothing except old-fashioned impressionism! I know his friends say it makes me look pretty, but they paint the same way he does. It was only an insult, but it was an insult after years of injury!"

Charley had resumed his seat, but his posture was still uncertain.

"Anyhow," he said, "the man seems to me to be rather decent in this."

"You don't know him," she retorted. "It's nothing but conceit."

"Then it's lucky for us he's conceited, Edith. How much did you tell him?"

"All I had to, but no more."

"Does he know for *sure*——?"

"He pretends he thinks it's all on the high spiritual plane that he puts himself on, and I daresay he half believes it is."

Charley settled more comfortably in his chair.

"He's promised not to contest?"

"Yes, he's promised."

"Does he know you'll probably bring suit in this state?"

"I suppose so. It can't make any difference."

"But in New York there's only one ground."

"Oh, he's so much in the clouds, he'll never remember that."

"He'll be told about it, as soon as he talks to his lawyer."

"He won't talk to his lawyer. He said he wouldn't; he's too proud to show that he takes any interest. He said all he'd do would be to write to a lawyer to represent him formally, not interfere, and not bother him again till it was all over. He's going to do exactly what we want him to do: nothing."

"So he says." Charley was still doubtful. "But do you think he'll stick to it?"

"I know I can make him stick to it."

Vanaman sighed, whether from relief or continued doubt. Certainly he had a distaste that Edith did not share.

"Well," he said, "I guess it'll be alright, then. We're to do what you—what we planned?"

She nodded.

"I'm to give the evidence you told me to?" he persisted.

"Yes. And you're to get some detective or other to back you up."

Koviloor Acadamy

Charley gulped audibly.

Her face was still turned toward the scented darkness of the street, but her hand sought his.

"I love you," she said, quietly.

His hand returned her pressure. He leaned forward to kiss her, but, midway, he wavered as if some force from without, some force to which he was not yet a stranger, restrained him.

"It does seem like a phony trick," he ventured.

"What does?" Her words were a challenge, but the movement that preceded them was made as if the force that checked Vanaman pushed her away.

"Why, all this—" he hung over the descriptive word—"frame-up."

Edith rose.

"It's not a frame-up; it's not anything of the kind," she said. The utterance of the denial helped her first to anger and then to honest conviction as she continued: "I've told you it was the truth—really. I'm perfectly certain he's been guilty some time or other. So were you, sure, Charley: you said so yourself. Only we can't prove it. What's the difference whether he was guilty last year or last week? I believe you like the man!"

It is so much easier to lie under oath than to lie in ordinary conversation! Charley contemplated perjury with increasing calm; but here was a serious matter.

"I don't exactly dislike him," said Vanaman. He added, with sincerity: "Except for what he's done to you."

But his first words had completed the regrowth of Edith's momentarily retarded self-assurance. She could go ahead now. She must.

"Well, he thinks you're no better than the dirt under his feet. I can tell you some things he's said about you, and I will when we've more time. He pretends to pity you so as to have an excuse to laugh at you. He's always laughing at that invention of yours. Only yesterday he as much as said you were as stupid as you were hopeful. 'If such a miracle is possible,' is the way he said it."

Charley wriggled. His invention and his belief that he was clever were tender points with him.

"There's money in my game," he said, "and there isn't any in Jim's."

"Then listen." It was too dark for them to see each other's faces, but Edith spread wide her arms. "Whatever I've done

Koviloor Acadamy

was for you. Whatever I will do will be for you. It's not wrong; but if it was I'd do it for your sake. It's our only chance, Charley. So if you don't want me, say so now, for by to-morrow it'll be too late. I'm to leave this apartment in the morning."

His answer was the answer that, loving him, she could not but want. The jibes of Jim's alleged scorn added to the strength of her appeal. Charley rose and put his arms about her. He said what she had said a few moments before. He said :

"I love you."

Koviloor Acadamy

SECOND CHAPTER

"KNOW thyself," adjured the Greek philosopher, and left us without a text-book. It is a text-book unlikely ever to be compiled, and yet not until a man knows himself can he know another man. How much is environment and how much heredity? The seed is lost in the root, the cause in the effect. Thus she that once was Edith Moxton and now was Edith Trent.

Edith Moxton used to sit in the twilight and dream dreams; Edith Trent sat in the twilight and dreamed them. The woman at the apartment-house window had been the girl of the small up-state town. Now she was Edith Trent with nothing of Edith Moxton about her; they had in common only the human organism that both had in common with all humanity; they were impassable miles apart. The very trail that led from that earliest Edith to this latest was lost in the desert of her life; choked by weeds, obliterated by drifting sands, barred by boulders. Even thought could not trace it.

Edith Moxton's home had been in western New York town called Ayton, and her life there was a life among failures. Her mother died in childbirth, leaving three sons and Edith, the third child, to the care of a trio of aunts for whom Edith's father provided a more or less precarious livelihood until he succumbed to general inefficiency. He had kept a "grocery-store"—held it by the severest exertions, since it was always trying to run away from him—and the effort was entirely too great.

"It's his kidneys," his sister Caroline used to say. "He finds the grocery business very trying on the kidneys."

When the grocery had quite crushed Mr Moxton, and his estate was settled, the store made a last leap for freedom and got away altogether, Uncle Morty, one of the decedent's two surviving brothers, mounted gaily on its back and spurring it splendidly forward. Uncle Morty had a bald head, a pug-nose, an overhanging red moustache, and little brown eyes, and when he returned to the Moxton house he returned on

Koviloor Acadamy

foot. He always said that his mount had thrown him; Edith, in later years, always said that he traded it for a bicycle-shop of which he presently appeared to be the owner.

Then began Edith's girlhood. In this the most important factor was her relatives.

First and least important, there was her other uncle, Uncle Gregory. He was a fat man that breathed hard. His voice was as sharp as a parrot's and, indeed, he looked a good deal like a plump cockatoo—a cockatoo in shepherd's plaid. He was said to practice painless dentistry in Chicago, but he had no need to pass from practice to proficiency: he selected from among his woman-patients one that combined money with heavy chances of mortality, married her, inherited her estate —and kept it to himself. On his rare visits to Ayton, he was worshipped by his three sisters, Edith's aunts, who occasionally secured a month's house-rent in return; but Edith disliked him because he used to call her "Poor Penelope"—she never knew why—and she would evoke her aunt's awed laughter by thrusting out her chest, puffing her little cheeks, and presenting a passable caricature of him.

Douglas, the youngest of Edith's brothers, early left home for Rochester, where he managed to get a place in the camera factory; just as he reached a salary that, as his Aunt Polly put it, "might have helped," he returned to Ayton to marry a girl that the family considered inferior: they saw little of him thereafter. The eldest brother, Fred, married a well-to-do girl in Duncannon, Pennsylvania, and got control of his blind brother-in-law's business. With that business he took over a blonde stenographer, the daughter of a waiter in a Philadelphia café of odd repute. When, at last, the stenographer took over Fred, she got the business along with him—or its capital—and the pair vanished in the dust-cloud of the collapse. Stephen, the remaining son, having a less sprightly mind than either of his brothers, was sent to Hobart and educated for the Episcopal ministry, which his aunts considered was a means of making a gentleman of him. He acquired, with laudable celerity, that hall-mark of proficient anglicanism, the art of microscopic penmanship, and was soon able to open his Bible at random and compose a sermon that found a hidden wealth of divine counsel in the very conjunctions and prepositions of any verse he chanced upon. He had a pretty, bovine face and the stubborn sullenness of native stupidity. Nevertheless, he knew enough to talk little, out of his pulpit, so he acquired a

Koviloor Acadamy
parish in Batavia. He also married money, in the person of a former sweetheart of his sprightly brother Fred; but she held her own purse, and the aunts, who had been outspoken in their expectations, profited not at all.

Those aunts were self-seeking only because they were unsought. Essentially, they were harmless enough creatures; town-gossip had concerned itself with them in their younger days, but the ebb of their charms left the flat shore of their later life vacuously even. Of the three, Caroline, the eldest, was considered the lady: her rôle was to do none of the housework (the Moxtons could no longer afford a servant) and to sit all day in the shaded parlour, made up to resemble Martha Washington, in black silk, with a bit of white lace at her throat, her high-heaped coiffure looking as if it were powdered; she kept her lips pursed and her hands folded; in reality, poverty had made her a coward, and her aim in life was the avoidance of further discomfort. Polly, the youngest, was a fat and frank vulgarian, who came home after the failures of the various ribbon-shops that she would from time to time borrow money to establish; she used to say—she had one of those voices, born for interruption, which drown all competitors—that she liked to eat apple-sauce with pork "because it cuts the grease"; for ten years she told her friends that there was every likelihood of her marrying a Buffalo lawyer, but, at the end of a decade, the Buffalo lawyer married another woman, and Polly's own lawyer decided that there were not sufficient grounds for Polly's proposed breach-of-promise suit.

Remained Aunt Hattie—stout, kittenish Aunt Hattie of the beady black eyes, the perpetually fluttering eyelids, the ineradicable smile. On her uncomplaining shoulders descended all the work of the house, yet she accomplished it and had time, though not always pupils, for music-lessons. At the piano she possessed facility without feeling, a prevalent division, and she liked easy shoes and strict clergymen. Especially the clergymen. "My nephew the clergyman" haunted her conversation like a Wagnerian *motif*. Her memory was a portrait-gallery entirely filled by the long succession of clergymen that, during her lifetime, had been rectors of her parish church. That the full-fledged priest, even in Stephen, was an archangel to her eyes logically follows, and of what a Bishop was, reverence forbids mention; but there long endured one lay-reader, a Mr Tschudy,

Koviloor Acadamy
otherwise engaged in the sardine line, whom she daily quoted with a gusto that placed him above Epiphanius. For, with her, religion was not only a passion; it was all the passions, and, what is well-nigh as important, all the joys—one might perhaps better say the sole joy—of her stifled heart. Indeed, it was not merely joyous; it was hilarious. Those apostles who urged upon the early Christians the joy of religion would have been amazed had they known Aunt Hattie and seen how her rock-founded faith was a temple of glee. What Mr Gilbert's *Mikado* found in the perfection of human justice, Aunt Hattie discovered in the perfection of her own creed: "a source of infinite merriment." She loved to front the sceptics; she would route them with laughter.

"Ha, ha!" she would laugh. "Ha, ha! But you can't—oh, ha, ha, ho, ho!—you can't get away—ha, *ha!* You can't get away from Christ!"

These were the persons, absent and present, whose influence pervaded the shifting Moxton habitation. Nor were the houses in which the family dwelt—they had to move often and always to a smaller house—any better suited for the rearing of a girl that was to become an artist's wife.

Except in size, they were much alike, those houses. The first-floor front was always reserved as Uncle Morty's bedroom, and the rear room on the same floor was always a sitting-room, where the sewing-machine was kept and where were done the darnings, the takings-in, the lettings-out, the almost miraculous regenerations of the family wardrobe. The other upstairs rooms were parcelled out among the aunts with a care for Caroline's gentility and Polly's assertiveness: Hattie could go anywhere, and Edith must find such place as was left. Finally, the front room on the ground floor was the parlour. Either because of convention inherited from rustic ancestors, or because its windows looked so directly on the pavement of the street that passing pedestrians could see inside, this chamber was kept in a perpetual gloom. It contained the old square piano; a horse-hair sofa that sagged in the middle, but sent daring occupants sliding off at the ends; a crayon portrait of Edith's father in a ponderous gilt frame, and, decorated with what Aunt Caroline called a "tidy," the hair-stuffed spring rocking-chair in which, she was wont to inform the visitor that sat in it, her dear brother had died. Aunt Caroline used to describe his last agonies with what was the only spark of literary feeling in the Moxton *ménage*.

Koviloor Acadamy

Everybody deferred to the pug-nosed, red-moustached Uncle Morty. To him even Aunt Caroline was second. What money the house secured was largely dependent upon his whim, and his whim was the child of his comfort. The result was a lesson in eugenics. Uncle Morty's bedroom was sacred; the cooking of a beefsteak beyond the shade of Uncle Morty's taste in meat-colours was a genuine calamity; Uncle Morty's jokes must be applauded; if his slippers were not warmed for him every evening—if his bag were not packed on the summer morning before he, the only member of the family to take a vacation, started for Cape May, grocer's bills were sure to be overdue.

Edith did not love these people or their surroundings. Her Uncle Gregory she had always ridiculed; her Uncle Morty she feared. She despised Douglas because of his unfortunate marriage; Fred, whom she began by liking, she ended by mistrusting, and Stephen, when the childish reverence for him that she had learned from her aunts wore away, she pronounced a bore. Her Aunt Polly, Edith enjoyed so long as none of her friends was about to observe the woman's coarseness, but Caroline and the patient Hattie were types that do not attract the admiration of girlhood.

For this, her companionships and amusements, of which she had as many as most girls, could not compensate. Failure, she early realized, was all about her; it surrounded her, smothered her. The town was a failure—that was the era when the American cities began most heavily to drain the smaller towns—Uncle Morty and her aunts were failures; her brothers—with the possible exception of Fred, who had at least the spirit of adventure in him, which she loved—were failures in a subtler, but equally dreadful way. And Edith, perhaps at first from the sheer human demand for contrast, hungered and thirsted for success.

Thus grew the dominant appetite of her life: her hatred of failure and that hatred's corresponding love of success. She wanted to climb out of the one and into the other. She would sacrifice anything for that. She wanted to replace Ayton by New York. She wanted to be quit of pinched pennies. She wanted, at first only a measure, and then a great deal of ease and comfort, of notice and attention and gaiety. Her father, out of the wreck wrought by the grocery store, had left her a little money—not much, but a little. When she came into that, she would use it to gain her heart's

Koviloor Acadamy
desire. She wanted to be a woman that was not carebound, with a man of that company which does the things that count. This was poetry to her and romance. She dreamed of it; night by night she prayed for it.

Then, when she was twenty-one, Uncle Morty, as her father's executor, showed her figures to explain how her inheritance had been consumed by the avuncular outlay for her board, clothes, and education. Until she met Jim, who came from the neighbouring town of Bryll, ther was no way out.

She fell in love with Jim. She made him the way out.

§ 2. In the Episcopal Church there was in those days—it still lingers here and there—a strong prejudice against divorce. Stephen had put it on as a matter of course as he had put on his surplice and accepted the Thirty-nine Articles, which, to save his life, he could not have recollected. Uncle Gregory had it: death had rid him of his wife. The aunts had it: they had never married. Douglas and Fred did not matter. In this one particular, Edith started by sharing the feelings of the majority of her family. Probably very few people marry with any thought of divorce. Certainly she did not. Yet she was now planning a divorce.

She had decided that Jim was a failure. She was sure she could have forgiven him for being what she described as "too slow": she could not forgive anyone for stopping short of success.

In New York she was living better than any Moxton had ever lived in Ayton; but that was not the point. She was particular about her clothes, preferring the expensive old to an inexpensive new; but that was not the point. She liked this small suite of studio-apartments in Sixty-seventh Street with its undeniable beauties and conveniences, its proximity to the St. Nicholas Rink, and its nearness to the great Park that made the Park seem partly hers; but neither was that the point. The point was that she was here what she had been in Ayton: she was subservient to the restriction of conditions; what difference there was was of degree. Pinched pennies had given place to pinched fifty-cent pieces: the pinch was as deep as ever. So far as she could see, Jim would live and die an unknown and struggling artist. She hated failure: Jim personified it.

His friends wearied her as much as he did: they talked of

Koviloor Acadamy
art as if it were a serious business, and they treated her with a politeness in which she read nothing but an amused toleration. Her own acquaintances were better: she disliked, to be sure, the prim Mrs Entwhistle, who lived in the suite across the hall and called dutifully every tenth day whether Edith returned the call or not; and she snubbed pretty Effie Mitchell, who also lived in the studio building and was suspected of not being quite all that she should be; but Muriel Carson was a good girl whom Edith respected, and Mrs Dunbar, who had been mere Jean Dent in Ayton, was now married to a young broker with a family that lived on Madison Avenue—Edith cultivated Muriel for Muriel's own sake and Mrs Dunbar for the sake of Madison Avenue; both had invited Mrs Trent to their houses, and Mrs Trent met successful people there. Finally, into her life Diana Wentworth had lately come and gave promise of remaining.

Diana was an unmarried higher assistant in a free library, but aspired to better things. She wore dark gowns and had black hair, both of which served to enhance the merits of a pale face, handsomely modelled. She talked a pseudo-radicalism, full of capital letters, which rather shocked Edith: Freud and Einstein, Pirandello and how to thwart fecundity. When it appeared that Jim did not care for Diana, Edith felt moved to like her. After that the friendship progressed.

"Freedom," Diana would sigh. "That is what Woman requires: Freedom. She must not be dependent on Man's favours. She must make Man give her Freedom. The vote was hardly even a start. We've got to have equality in business and morals. Our sex-life must be as free as the male's."

They got along splendidly now: they shared a basis of conventionality that each thought the other lacked.

For such a woman as Edith to have a child is sometimes the salvation of the mother, as it is sometimes the damnation of the child, but Edith, avoiding what Diana described as "the ultimate servitude," hungered, as we have seen, for another sort of success. During a long time she reached for it timidly and touched it only in secret. Her first philandering she bitterly regretted; the second resulted only in fears of detection; after that, until she met Charley, such pleasantries were no more than the price she paid for a few hours' taste of liberty from care. "You're the sort of woman that never knows a stone-wall till she's batted her head against it."

Koviloor Acadamy
George Mertcheson had once said to her; she wondered if she had struck her head against the stone-wall now.

§ 3. It was Jim that presented Charley. They had met a few times at Charley's club, and the husband brought Vanaman home with him.

For a week, perhaps a fortnight, she thought Vanaman uncouth. She ridiculed him to her friends. Then, quite suddenly, she was in love. She knew now that she had been so from the moment of their meeting.

Much has been said against love at first sight, most of it unconvincing. Really, there is no other sort of love, and it was in such fashion Edith loved Vanaman. She had never had the power of seeing things in their beginning, though, when she did see them, she saw them in strong lights. This light shone as the full gaze of the sun: it blinded her to everything else; it blotted out all the lesser lights of the past. What she had called uncouthness she now called power.

Charley was an inventor, not a mere painter of pictures that a few persons might or might not care about, but a force that could leave its impress in every corner of the globe, on trade, on affairs, on the daily lives of men and women as yet unborn. He was no mere mechanic; indeed, he had no talent for tools: what he had was a mighty idea. Moreover, he had travelled in strange countries; the launching of his radio-receiver was bringing him into contact with financial giants; he was the only son of a well-to-do father. Here at last was success; here at last was a man that had done something and would do more. It did not matter that she was slightly his senior. She thrilled at his touch; she hung on his words; when he came near her, the blood flooded her cheeks and dimmed her sight; the first time that he kissed her, she nearly fainted in his arms.

And to Vanaman Edith was all that he was to her. His earliest glance saw her as a woman of such radiant health that it seemed as if nothing man could do to her would hurt her; his later talks convinced him that she was a neglected beauty shackled to an unappreciative blunderer. At his own home his father generally discouraged talk of the invention, but Edith urged him to talk of it. He read in her the adventurous soul; himself a shy man, not the least of his inventions were most of his adventures; but from her he felt that he could draw the courage to make his business hazard real. When he talked to her, the dreary repression of his own home faded

Koviloor Acadamy
into the remotest distance. Here lived and breathed a brave woman, a woman that dared; here glittered his opposite, his completion. Before her vanished the bluster with which he habitually hid his shyness; a new tenderness replaced his carefully assumed air of rugged effrontery. He could not enter the room wherein she sat without experiencing that physical exaltation which told him he was another man. Married to Edith, he would be that man until the day he died. He had the conventional sense of honour that few conventional men possess—had it so entirely that he never thought of retaining without marriage the gift that he had filched from marriage. He felt that he needed Edith in a relation in which he could present her, at last, to his world; he felt that he must have her in the bonds of a companionship that, though he and she combined to break her companionship with Jim, were still the strongest man had devised; he felt that duty pointed where need pointed and desire: so long as there was no other way to have her, he wanted Edith for his mistress; but, above all else, he wanted, so soon as he could bring the change about, to make her his wife.

Since they saw each other in this light, it was scarcely to be expected that either of them would see Edith as she was seen in the picture her husband had painted of her. Charley hated that picture almost as much as he hated the fact of Edith's marriage; Edith hated it almost as much as she hated Jim. Charley thought of her always as she was with him; Edith thought of herself always as she was after six o'clock in the evening: the picture was an obvious attempt to represent her at 8 a.m.

"And I asked him," she had complained to one of Jim's artist friends, "what he was going to call it, and he said he was going to call it 'A Woman'!"

The friend looked at her with mild incomprehension.

"Well," he said, "it *is* a woman, isn't it?"

§ 4. When Charley had left her on that decisive Spring evening, she reseated herself at the window and tried again to review many of these things. They fixed her determination. They intensified her hunger for the success at hand and lashed her to indignation against the ineffectualities that still surrounded her. They sharpened her love for Vanaman.

Well, it was done now, the thing that would end the past and begin the future. She had told Jim she would take apart-

Koviloor Acadamy
ments for herself next morning, and she had secured his promise to pay the rent for them until the granting of the divorce. More than that she had not hoped for: Charley must help her and alimony she would not seek for the excellent reason that the least alimony—and even Edith knew this could easily be proved—was beyond Jim's means.

So she might think now about Charley. His father was a crabbed old man, an old-fashioned old man who disliked her, but—there was no use in blinking at facts—an old man who was dying. Charley's sister, who, with Charley, would thus soon be the only survivor of the Vanaman family, was an utterly suppressed person, a nonentity. Nothing stood against Edith's plans, and with them stood love, the resolution to succeed, and this Spring evening's wonderful promise of a youth renewed.

Long since, when it seemed chic to go to church, she had heard the good Bishop Peel preach a sermon on the zest of youth. He read from the Psalms:

"Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . who redeemeth thy life from destruction . . . so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's." Her youth was renewed, and she thanked God for it—if a God existed. Her youth was renewed, and, thank God, she was going to give it to Charley.

There was another sound at the door. It was Jim coming home.

Koviloor Acadamy

THIRD CHAPTER

As he picked up the telephone-receiver in his bedroom on that raw Monday morning in October, Vanaman noticed that his hand shook, and it occurred to him to wonder if he was afraid of the woman he was about to talk to. He could not understand how it was possible for a man to be afraid of a woman that he loved.

"Hudson, one-two-nine-three," he ordered.

In his ear the number was presently repeated:

"One-two-nine-thr-r-ree, Hudson."

"That's right," said Vanaman.

It was only a little while before that he had crawled out of bed. There was a mirror on the wall beside the telephone, and, as he waited, he glanced at it.

"I'm fine, I am!" he muttered to his reflection. "I look almost as bad as I feel."

He was indeed looking badly. Ordinarily a short, stocky man with pink cheeks and an aggressive face, to-day he seemed shrunken and dull. His eyes, always prominent, were now red and bulging like a frog's. His hair, which he had not yet brushed, rose dry and brittle from his round poll, and his mouth hung so heavily that it tugged at his cheeks. He remembered that, after taking Edith back to her rooms last night, he had gone to his club and had some more to drink, but he could not remember leaving the club. He fervently hoped that he had not disgraced himself there; in his affections and pride his club held a place next to Edith and his invention. . . . Well, he must stop at a barber's and have his face massaged. He thought of the grateful hot towels. . . . The massage would take away the physical signs of his mistake: he had not been a heavy drinker for a long enough time to bear indelible markings. But he did hope that, at the club,——

"Hello!"

The word was sharp and irritable. It darted into his head as if it were an arrow.

Koviloor Acadamy

Charley started. "I wish she wouldn't spring herself that way," he thought. But he achieved a smile; he felt that, even in a telephone conversation with Edith, his face must not show disloyalty. After all, he was not disloyal; he was, and for months had been, for the first time in his life, thoroughly in love.

"Good-morning, dear," he said.

"Who's talking?"

He was annoyed. Could there, he reflected, be any mistake?

"Isn't this Mrs Trent?" he inquired.

"If you don't tell me who's talking, I'll ring off."

No mistaking her voice now: it was Edith's.

"This is Charley," said Vanaman. "Didn't you recognise me?"

"No, I didn't."

"But, dearie, I've been calling you about this time every morning for weeks, and——"

"And I've always told you to give your name first. You know we can't be too careful."

"Nonsense. It doesn't matter now. It's all over but the signing of the degree."

"Perhaps it is, but you can never tell. I'm beginning to believe this thing hasn't any end."

Vanaman chuckled. He was one of those men who like to feel that the women they love are their inferiors in common sense.

"Poof!" said he. "That's what I wanted to talk to you about. I've just been calling up Schultz's office. I slept late this morning, and I thought perhaps——"

"What did he say?"

"Just a moment, please. I slept late, and I thought perhaps——"

"Oh, do tell me what the lawyer said!"

"All right." It seemed to Vanaman that he was always being interrupted. "He said there was no question but what the decree would be signed to-day."

Charley believed that this would be good news and would be received accordingly, yet the voice in his ear began its reply with a gasp of dissatisfaction.

"To-day? I should think it would! Don't they know that we want to have it all straightened out by this afternoon?"

"Why, Edith——"

"Didn't you tell Schultz that? I told you to tell him that."

Koviloor Acadamy

"Yes, I told him that; but Schultz isn't the judge, dear."

"Well, he can tell the judge."

"How could he, Edith? He's only one of the lawyers in the case, and the——"

"If he's much of a lawyer, I should think he could hurry things a little. Is that all he said?"

"Yes, that's all, but it's pretty good. You see——"

"Why don't you come up here?"

Vanaman's haggard cheeks coloured with the red of pleasure.

"I was going to ask if I might," he said. "I thought it would be so nice if we could be together when the news came. I thought——"

"All right. Come on."

There was a click in his ear. He knew that she had hung up the receiver at her end of the line.

§ 2. Vanaman turned to dress. He was a man approaching thirty, already tending toward sluggishness. He was inclined to be careless in the matter of his clothes; when, for instance, he wanted to appear fashionable, and thought he was going to a place where he could not have to open his overcoat, his custom was to retain a sack suit and put on a silk hat. This morning, however, he made his toilet, though painfully, with uncommon care.

The past few months had allowed him days and nights of delirious happiness, but not one hour of comfort. The summer vacation had brought to a standstill all his endeavours toward interesting financiers in his invention, and motion had not been resumed with the arrival of autumn. That was bad enough. What was worse was the tedious delay of Edith's divorce.

Once it had devised divorce, the law seemed laboriously to have hedged it about with the most ingenious difficulties. Charley had known, of course, that, whereas the consent of the two principals is necessary to the making of a marriage, the opposition of one is the *sine qua non* to its dissolution—that the only reason why two persons can be married is that they want to be, and the only reason why they cannot end their marriage in a mutual wish to end it—but, with that lightness of heart with which all who do not know the law enter upon litigation, he supposed Jim's merely formal denial, through a lawyer, of the charges in the libel would suffice.

Koviloor Acadamy

Not at all. The trouble began with the search for a lawyer; it could not truthfully be said to be ended yet.

"We'd better have somebody one of us knows," Edith had suggested. "Why not get your father's lawyer? What's his name? Mr Zoller."

"He's too close to the old man," said Charley.

"Oh, nonsense. Lawyers have to keep their clients' secrets. That's professional etiquette."

They went to Mr Zoller, a hard, dry little man of fifty, who had a cold gaze. As he listened to Edith's story, his expression grew increasingly grim. When Charley followed and began the account of Jim's infidelity which the lovers had agreed to present, Mr Zoller interrupted by sending Edith out of his stuffy room. Then he turned to Charley.

"I can't take this case," he said.

Charley's eyes bulged.

"Why not?" he asked.

"Do you want me to tell you?"

Charley smelt suspicion, but he had to bluster, so he said:

"Yes, I do. Didn't we come here to consult you?"

"Very well. I won't take it because it doesn't sound straight."

Vanaman's colour faded. It was all that he could do to demand:

"Are you trying to tell me I'm a liar?"

"I said it didn't *sound* straight," the lawyer calmly explained. "Perhaps I had better have said it didn't *look* straight. I've known you since you were a boy up in Carmel, Charley, and, anyhow, you've told me to speak out. Well, anybody can see you're in love with the woman, and I'm too good a friend of your father's to play him a trick like this. Good-afternoon."

Charley recovered enough command of himself to storm until he saw it was of no use. After that he devoted his remaining energies toward recalling to Mr Zoller the lawyer's professional duty to keep his client's affairs to himself.

"I think," said Mr Zoller, "that I know quite as much about my duties as you do, Charley. *Good*-afternoon."

Although meticulously expurgated, Charley's report of this conversation upset Edith, and the reply of the next lawyer upon whom they called angered her still more. He curtly told them that he did not handle divorce cases.

Koviloor Acadamy
"The idea!" she cried, as they left the second office. "Isn't he a lawyer, and isn't divorce the law?"

There were tears of vexation in her eyes. She was too discouraged to seek farther that day.

By the next morning, Charley had bethought himself of a friend lately admitted to the bar. They found him, only to be told that their case was not strong enough.

"But you might try Leishman," he suggested with the tolerant cynicism of the newly made advocate, "he'll take anything."

They did try Leishman. On the way to him they felt forced considerably to strengthen their case. Leishman's weary face showed no signs of approval.

"Where's your corroboration?" he asked. "You're not enough, you know, Mr Vanaman."

Charley remembered that he had meant to persuade a private detective.

"There's a detective——" he began.

Leishman interrupted. His eyes fixed Charley's with a meaning stare.

"You're sure the husband's lawyer will make only a formal defence and cross-examination?"

"Yes."

The stare was turned on Edith.

"You, too, madam?"

"Oh, yes," said Edith.

Leishman returned his significant glance to Charley.

"It would be a curious coincidence," said Leishman, slowly, "if the detective you mean is one in the employ of the Canarde Agency."

"I'm not sure——" began Charley.

Leishman raised his hand. His eyes glared.

"Because," he concluded, "the Canarde people are friends of mine, and I know they do satisfactory work for my clients —thoroughly satisfactory."

It was Edith who first understood him.

"The detective does come from the Grenarde Agency," she said.

Her voice was low, but Leishman caught her error.

"Canarde," he said; "not Grenarde."

"Canarde, of course," said Edith. They would have to do it now.

But Leishman was proceeding:

Koviloor Acadamy
"And you say, Mr Vanaman, that this detective from the Canarde—C-a-n-a-r-d-e—Agency, whose name you have for the moment forgotten, was with you when you entered the house that you had seen Mr—er—Mr Trent enter half an hour before?"

In this manner he performed the task that he called "building up the case." When he had finished with Charley, he secured additional details from Edith. There was no resisting him: he would compel an ititial lie by remarking that, of course, if such-and-such were not the facts, a decree would be impossible, but that he was sure such-and-such really were the facts, weren't they? The step would be taken and a hundred more, all unimagined at the start, followed upon it inevitably. By the time these clients left Leishman's office, the least of Jim's offenses were drunkenness, lechery, and wife-beating.

And yet, in the end, even Leishman failed them. He was too slow and too expensive. Every couple of days he would telephone to Edith's apartments for a few dollars for a notary's fee, a subpœna-server's fee, for one fee after another, and when she began to postpone payments the attorney refused to proceed with the case until payments were made. Every move consumed a week, and each week there was revealed a new move of the necessity of which neither Edith nor Charley had been forewarned. Edith sent Charley on many an angry errand to Leishman, and when Leishman at last ordered his clerks not to admit this caller unless he had been especially told to call, Edith herself took to haunting the offices and became a ghost that the attorney had to lay by informing her that her case was not the only one in which he was retained.

It has been written that the bitterest anger is that of quarrelling brothers, but the anger of a quarrelling brother is honey-sweet compared to that of a dissatisfied client at law. Edith told Leishman nearly all that she thought of him. She said she would take her case elsewhere, and, happening to remember a legal personage by the name of Marcus Schultz, who used to pass his summers near Ayton and knew her father, she took her case to him.

She presented it precisely as Leishman had "built it up." She had repeated it so often, made so many affidavits about it and been so thoroughly rehearsed in it that she was now letter-perfect. By this time she really believed a large part of

Koviloor Acadamy
it. Most, she had long since managed to assure herself, represented fairly correct guesses at what was, without guesswork, merely undemonstrably true; the rest, she concluded, was but a milder cloak for still, and worse, other offences that had likewise escaped her notice.

The long and lean Mr Schultz heard her out.

"I don't like to take divorce cases," he said when she had finished, "and I may as well tell you there are some things about this particular case that I especially dislike; but your father was a friend of mine, and I'll do what I can for you."

Edith said: "Thank you."

"Has there," asked Schultz, "been any other lawyer in it? I mean, on your side, Mrs Trent?"

Edith wondered why he suspected that there had been: he plainly did suspect it. She nodded an assent.

"H'm. Who was he?"

"A Mr Leishman," faltered Edith. "But he wasn't any good," she hurriedly added. "He was always postponing things and always asking for money. He'd never have done anything. Why——"

"Still," said Schultz, "you paid him?"

"I was paying him something every other day," replied Edith hotly.

"I see. Well, just bring me Mr Leishman's receipted bill for professional services to date and I'll take the case."

Edith protested that she had already paid Leishman out of all reason, but Schultz was firm. The production of that receipted bill was necessary for the satisfaction of professional etiquette. Besides, he knew this man Leishman—only professionally, Schultz was careful to explain—and he was the sort of person from whom—Well, in short, that receipt must be secured and shown.

Leishman was exorbitant; he charged for several things that Edith was sure he had never done, and more, that she was sure she ought not to be asked to pay for; but there was no escape. At last Charley somehow got her the money.

Then it seemed as if the whole tedious process was again to be gone through. Annoyance followed upon delay and fresh delay upon annoyance. Schultz, said Edith, made Charley and her and the detective—the latter procured during the Leishman reign—do all the work; the lawyer showed a strong dislike to originating anything; he would not listen to the suggestions for legal short-cuts that Vanaman picked up

Koviloor Acadamy

from club-gossip and brought to him, and Edith complained that she had never heard of an attorney so anxious to force his employers to do the unclean chores for him. Once he openly expressed mistrust of their evidence and asked for fresh. He recommended another detective agency which was, he said, more trustworthy than the Canarde; advised that this agency report direct to him after watching Jim, and, when the report showed Edith's husband to be behaving with an innocence that Edith declared was assumed only to give them trouble, Schultz flew into a rage and threatened to wash his hands of the whole affair. Edith's tears were all that softened him.

So the hot summer crawled along. Edith refused to leave town: she wanted, she explained, "to be on the spot," and she expected Charley to be there, too. Not that it helped. They passed breathless afternoons in the apartments where she was living, talking it over and over, swinging about a weary circle, and sticky evenings at roof-gardens, trying to devise means to hurry the tardy engine of the law. Jim, it appeared, would keep his word. Only once, when he happened to hear he was to be charged with infamies that would be supererogatory, he threatened, so his lawyer wrote, to enter a cross-suit, but this was no more than entered before the tearful repentances of his wife engaged its withdrawal. Thus far, too, the newspapers had been eluded. But practical progress limped.

At last, however, the ear of a court was gained, a referee appointed and the testimony that Leishman had "built up" was taken. Edith gave her evidence. Charley gave his. The detective followed. The unessential details were hazarded; the opposition was merely formal. The decree nisi was granted, and now it was expected that the decree would be made absolute some time during this October day.

§ 3. Once in his clothes, Charley descended the stairs softly. He wanted to pass unobserved the door of his father's room; but the floor of the landing creaked under his sluggish tread and the door was opened. His sister had detected him.

"Charley," said she.

She spoke in the commanding whisper of amateur nurses. The dim light of the stairway showed her to be a dumpy woman with an empty spectacled face and too many years for the likelihood of marriage. Her myopic eyes were round with

Koviloor Acadamy
a serious vacancy. Her mouth was patient. She belonged to the unhappy type that is dismissed with the postscript: "But she *is* good." Mame had never been anything but a useful drudge in the Vanaman household. Charley loved her, but he considered her a cipher.

"Charley," she repeated. She put out a plump hand.

Her brother brushed the hand away.

"Let me go, Mame," he said: "I'm in a hurry."

"But, Charley," she pleaded, "you're never going without saying 'Good-morning' to poppa. He had a very bad night. Dr Morley's just left."

Charley gave one of his short chuckles.

"Had a bad night, did he? Well, so did I." He really did not feel like chuckling, still less like visiting the sick: he wanted a bracer and a massage—and Edith was waiting.

"Oh, Charley!"

In the grip of that argument, Vanaman twisted his body as a wayward lad wriggles when the schoolmistress substitutes gentle persuasion for the righteous rod.

"Oh, well," he said, "I'm sorry. I don't want him to be sick, only I *am* in a hurry, and——"

"He wants to see you," said Mame Vanaman. "He's been asking for you these two hours, but I didn't want to wake you up."

"All right," said Charley, resignedly. He really was sorry for his father, but he really was in a hurry, too. "I'll come in; only, mind you, it's just a moment." He started to pass her and then noticed that she made a movement in the opposite direction. "Where are you going?" he asked.

"I was going downstairs," said Mame, timidly. "I couldn't leave poppa alone, but now you were going in I thought I might telephone Mrs Hamilton. I wanted to tell her that I couldn't go to the missionary meeting to-night, poppa being so sick."

"Oh," said Charley. Mame's sole dissipation was her church's missionary society: the family tolerated so much. "All right; but don't be long. Is that the newspaper you've got there?"

Mame was holding something in her left hand. She seemed to be trying to conceal it behind her back.

"Yes," she said.

"Any news?"

"N-no. Nothing much. There's——"

Koviloor Acadamy
Charley had been fearing the papers. Mame's manner renewed his fears.

"There's something in it you don't want me to see. What is it?"

Mame had a certain gentle craft, but she never rebelled against established authority.

"O Charley," she said, "it's just a few lines away in the back. Nobody'll notice it."

Her brother seized the paper.

"What do you mean?" he urged. "What is it?"

"It just says that Mrs Trent has been trying to get a divorce. It's only a couple of lines, but oh, Charley, isn't it awful?"

The veins stood out on Charley's forehead. In the dim light of the landing his eyes ran over the fluttering pages of the paper.

"Where is it? Where is it? Is that all it said?"

"Yes, that's all. Just that."

"No names? It don't print the names of any of the witnesses?"

"No; it says the evidence won't be made public.—Really, Charley, do you think we ought to leave poppa alone so long?"

"Where is the thing? Confound it, Mame, can't you show me?"

She anxiously showed it him. It was, as she said, a mere statement to the effect that the suit, the testimony in which had been impounded, would probably result to-day in the entry of the final decree. Nevertheless, Charley did not like it.

"Did poppa see this?" he inquired.

"I—He read the paper. Dr Morley said he was well enough to."

"But"—her brother's index-finger struck the offending piece of news—"did he see this? That's what I want to know."

"Yes, I think so."

"You think so! Don't you *know*? Did he say anything about it?"

"No, Charley, really he didn't."

Charley had not been on a witness-stand for nothing. He pressed his point.

"What did he say?"

"He didn't say anything."

"You're sure?"

Koviloor Acadamy
"Well"—Mame wavered; she genuinely wanted to save her brother from pain and she knew he was at least a friend of Mrs Trent—"he did say something about divorce in general. I forgot just what it was; but you know he don't approve of divorce, Charley."

Charley had to give it up. He groaned surrender to these weak evasions.

"Go and telephone your Mrs Hamilton," he said.

He saw his sister start downstairs toward the telephone in the hall. Then he opened the door of the first-floor front bedroom and went in.

§ 4. When the family, at Charley's proposal, had moved to New York after Mrs Vanaman's death, and bought the house in Lexington Avenue, its head furnished the entire place, and especially this bedroom, as much as was possible with the furniture, and after the manner, of the house in Carmel in which old Vanaman had lived while making his fortune and from which he never ceased to regret his departure. Now, as with a new vision, Charley saw the room, and he hated it. He saw the mahogany washstand with a marble top, the mahogany bureau with a marble top, the marble mantel-piece, and he saw the high mahogany bed in which his father lay.

The old man was covered to the chin, his long, grey beard resting outside the blanket that Mame had tucked about him with mathematical precision. His large head was quite bald, and the skin, drawn tight over his high cheek-bones and beak nose, was yellow. He lay still, but the eyes that, under the bushy brows of iron grey, sought Charley's were black and keen.

"Good-morning," said Charley, with a sturdily evoked cheerfulness. He came to the foot of the bed and stood there irresolutely. "Mame said you didn't have a very good night, but you're looking fine."

The elder Vanaman's mouth tightened.

"Don't lie to me," he answered; his voice was firm, calm. "I'm not looking fine—an' no more are you."

"Oh, I'm alright." Charley shifted his weight from one foot to the other. "A little indigestion, that's all. Had grouse for dinner, and I ate——"

"*Ate!*" The word was accusation. "How's your invention comin' on?"

Koviloor Acadamy

Charley brightened.

"If you'll only put up the money I asked you about——" he began.

"Seen Mrs Trent lately?"

"I—no——" The son's cheeks became brick red. "I wish you'd let me explain about her."

"I don't need explanations," the old man answered. "What I want is actions. I told you not to have anything to do with her. I know what she is."

"She's a lady!" Charley's protest was dutifully loyal to Edith.

"She's a married woman," said his father, quietly. "I won't have you runnin' around with married women."

To forestall parental reference to the newspaper paragraph, "She's getting a divorce," said Charley.

The old man's mouth worked.

"I know that, too," said he, "an' I guess you knew it long ago. I guess you wouldn't 'a' told me if you didn't know it was in the papers. Well, there's only one thing worse than a married woman, and that's a woman who's divorced."

"What else could she do?" Charley pleaded. A summer at law had made him as bitter as the law makes most people. "Her husband was a brute."

"So *she* says," muttered the father.

"He didn't deny it. He didn't give evidence."

"Maybe he was too much of a man, Charley."

"He's too much of a something-else. He did begin a cross-suit, but he had to drop it."

Under the covers the old man's feet fidgeted.

"He named you in it. Oh, I don't get all my news out o' the newspapers! I hear a little o' what's goin' on, even if I am bed-ridden."

This must be Zoller's work. Inwardly, Charley cursed Zoller. He wondered how much the lawyer had told, but knew that to ask either Zoller or the elder Vanaman would be to invite further trouble.

"But I tell you he dropped it. He hadn't any evidence. Besides——"

"Charley," said the father, "you can't talk this way to me. I've lived too long. I know what lies a woman can threaten to tell, and if she's good-lookin' they're worse ones. When she does threaten to tell 'em, it isn't only a matter o' no evidence that'll make a man drop his cross-suit. Now, don't

Koviloor Acadamy
let me hear any more about it; you keep away from that woman or you don't get another cent out o' me."

He had said it often before; now he said it with an air of fearsome finality. When Charley was afraid he grew angry. Moreover, he was in love; he knew both the need of money and the fact that Edith would be properly displeased if he were late for his appointment with her.

"Why?" he demanded.

"Because she's a bad lot," said the father.

The son's eyes glared. "She's the best woman in the world!" he affirmed.

His tone betrayed him. His father's sharp gaze read the younger man's mind.

"Don't tell me you want to marry her!"

Charley's lungs seemed to collapse. He had to wait a perceptible moment before, still forgetting discretion, he could cry:

"You don't understand! You're too old-fashioned. You can't see that the world's grown any since you were young. If you'd only take the trouble to listen to the evidence in the Trent case; if——"

His father drew a slow arm from beneath the bedclothes. He shook a skinny forefinger at his son.

"Charley," he said, "Dr Morley says I've got to have quiet. You'd better go. But if you marry that woman, I won't leave you a cent, so help me God!"

Koviloor Acadamy

FOURTH CHAPTER

SOMEWHERE, in starlit space, are there stars that are both brown and bright? Charley, who was in most matters no poet, always asked himself that question when he thought of Edith Trent's eyes. To say merely that they were brown was to say so little of them as to say almost nothing at all; they were like stars, and yet they were like no stars he had ever seen.

He often wondered how he could describe her. He had been called upon a hundred times to describe the complicated improvement that he had invented for the radio, and in this he could always make himself clear. But Edith—there his powers of description floundered. She was tall and dark; the lines of her lips were generous; the curve of her breast awakened his memories of boy-read mythology and the stories of goddesses that walked the earth and condescended to the loves of men. At such times he thought of her as a woman with the body of Aphrodite and the face of Artemis, although he had long since forgotten those Olympian names. He thought of Edith's forehead as broad and low, of her lips as passionate and firm; much as Homer thought of the dawn, uninspired Charley unsuspectingly thought of the pink wave that would climb from Edith's shoulder to her cheek. But of her eyes he always thought as of stars.

With his father's threat hammering at his heart, how was he to face them now? To succeed with Edith and to succeed with his invention—that was all the success he asked: why should it be denied him? He could not believe that all life was against him. Some way out there must be.

The drink and the massage gave him courage; they propped his shaken power of decision. His father? Well, there was no help for it: he must keep his father in ignorance of his marriage to Edith; so long as old Vanaman knew nothing of that, he would take no step to divert his property from his son. And Edith? Charley dared not tell her outright what had happened—at least not just yet. He did not want to lie to her, but she had had so much to vex her lately: he must not give her more. Besides, he knew something of her ab-

Koviloor Acadamy

horrence of failure: of course, she would not throw him over, but she might want him to wait until the receiver had so thoroughly redeemed its promises that they would not need his father's money—and the law had already strained Charley's endurance to its breaking-point. No, he would now only prepare Edith, tell her only in part; he would break the rest of the news to her after their marriage. Edith was a practical woman: she would understand the need of secrecy. She loved him: knowing that love alone had prompted it, she would forgive his deception.

Again he fell to thinking of her as Artemis and Aphrodite.

§ 2. When he entered the living-room of her apartment-Olympus—she had moved all the way across town from Jim's address—he found awaiting him a wrathful goddess.

"You're late," said Edith. "Where on earth have you been all this time?"

Charley had one of his rare moments of inspiration.

"That's just it," he said: "I've been on earth, and it's a long way from earth to heaven."

His eyes sought her hungrily. She had not risen from the pillow-heaped couch on which she was lying when he let himself into the apartments with the key that, when she rented them, she had given him.

Edith continued to be particular about her clothes: as she lay here, her crossed little feet were shod in high-heeled canary-coloured slippers; silk stockings of the same shade swathed her slim ankles and lithe legs; a canary-coloured negligee clung eagerly to her torso, revealing lines he loved. The gown fell far away from the base of her throat; and, framing the oval of her dark face, billowed the black waves of hair bobbed by precision, but curled to the semblance of an alluring disorder.

With movements too rapid for a man of his bulk, Charley put his hat and overcoat on the nearest chair and crossed to her. He sat on the edge of the couch. He had none of the graces of the perfect lover, but he had energy and earnestness. Almost roughly he forced an arm about her waist and drew her head to his shoulder. He seized her hand.

"Edith!" he whispered.

He tried to raise her head towards his, but she held back, so he lowered his own. Thus he sat for a moment, looking into the stars that were her eyes.

Koviloor Acadamy

"Edith!" he whispered again.

Their lips met. But the kiss ended abruptly.

"What's the matter?" he asked. He sat upright now.

She shook the wonderful waves of her hair.

"Nothing."

"Something's wrong, I know."

"Well," she pouted, "I told you you were late."

"I overslept."

"You drank too much last night," said Edith, composedly. "And you've had more this morning."

"How could I help it?" He did not like criticism, even from a quiet goddess, and his tone seemed now to imply that the fault of his intemperance lay at her door. "This thing's got so on my nerves that I've got to do something."

"*Your* nerves?" She raised her level brows. "What do you think it must do to mine?"

"I know; but you drank your share."

"My share didn't go to my head."

Charley repeated that petulant wriggling of the shoulders with which he had met his sister's appeal.

"It was Jim taught me to drink," he said. "He's the cold-blooded kind that never take too much. He pretends he thinks everybody else is as slow as he is. Sometimes I half believe he taught me so as to get square with me.—People say *he* isn't drinking a bit now."

The mention of the absent man seemed to drop a veil between the lovers, who were yet as much bound together by their common hatred of that man as they were by their passion for each other. They drew unconsciously apart.

"If people do say it," declared Edith, "they're not telling the truth."

Charley had begun by postponing speech of what was uppermost in his mind. Jim, however, was no sooner mentioned than other topics vanished before him.

"I don't know about that." Vanaman shook his round head. "It would be just like his devilishness to quit for good." He reflected on this. "Jim'll want to show that we lied."

"Nobody will believe him, no matter what he does," Edith quietly interrupted. "There is the testimony that he hardly denied, and, anyhow, people always believe a woman. All we have to do is be careful."

Charley heaved the heavy sigh of one that makes a supreme sacrifice.

Koviloor Acadamy
"All right," he said, smacking his knee with his fat hand. "I'll just promise you one thing: from the minute you get your decree, I'll never take another drink."

"Nothing?" she inquired.

"Well, not liquor, anyhow. Thank God, there are still some places left where a man can get real wine with his dinner." He thought he saw a cloud of doubt dim the brightness of her eyes. "I mean it, that about the hard stuff," he affirmed. "Not even cocktails. You just wait and see."

Edith had drawn a pillow away from him when they began to speak of her husband. Now she put it behind her and sat in the centre of the couch. She did not comment on his declaration.

"You believe me, don't you?" asked Vanaman.

"Oh, I suppose so," said Edith. Her fingers were busy with an invisible spot on her canary negligee, and her eyes followed her fingers.

Charley tried to take her hand.

"You'll promise the same?" he urged.

"I? Why should I?" Her gaze met him fairly, but her hand retreated and escaped. "I never take too much."

"I know, dear, but you might sometime."

"I'm too careful—even if I'm not cold-blooded."

"You can't tell. I used to think I was careful. And when we're married—well, you never know what it'll lead you to."

Edith smiled a world-old smile.

"I know what it led you to," she said. "That first evening, when Jim was out of town, if you hadn't had one drink more than you needed, you wouldn't have had the courage to say what you did."

"No," chuckled Charley; "and every time you went on the witness-stand——"

"Are you sorry for that?" she challenged.

"Are you sorry I said what I did on that first evening?" he countered.

He bent toward her, but her eyes caught the desk-telephone that stood on a table beside the wall opposite them.

"Why doesn't Schultz send us word?" she asked.

§3. The morning—for it was indeed late when Charley arrived—had been trying to Edith for more reasons than one. Now that the long strain of the suit was nearing its end, she felt superstitiously afraid of telephoning Schultz for news.

Koviloor Acadamy
She had arranged with Charley, on the night previous, to call the lawyer before noon, and Schultz was now to call her apartments the moment the decree was signed. The shorter the wait grew, the severer it became. She had risen early, bought all the morning papers—she had an especial reason for looking at them to-day—and then, disappointed at what she found there, she went for a nervous walk to pass the time until that fixed for a word from Charley.

Perhaps because she was missing her old walks in the Park, she went in that direction. She had a horror of encountering Jim, but she knew that he would be at his easel at this hour, making the most of the morning light. The person she did encounter was Mrs Dunbar, the former Jean Dent of Ayton and the present wife of the broker with a family in Madison Avenue. It was their first meeting since Edith had left Jim.

Edith's sensations were new to her and disquieting. She saw Mrs Dunbar before that lady raised her eyes, and the petitioner in divorce found herself strangely unstable of purpose. Did Mrs Dunbar read the papers? And if she did, would she care? Madison Avenue, as represented in the woman that was once Jean Dent, stood for a factor that Edith, although she knew it now to be tremendous, had not counted on. To be sure, the Madison Avenues of this world have divorces of their own and to spare; but, if you live in them, it is one thing to have a skeleton in your cupboard, or even to be aware that your neighbours have one in theirs, and quite another matter to open your drawing-room to somebody that does not as yet quite belong there and presents herself at your door with the corpse of a freshly murdered reputation strapped to her back for all folk to see. Edith would rather have liked to get into that parlour; not, of course, to stay there, but to be able occasionally to come and go. Here and now the issue might be determined. Without any conscious doubt of the righteousness of her position, Edith wanted to run away.

"Why, Edith Trent!" Mrs Dunbar spoke at the moment when Jim's wife turned to cross the street. "I *am* glad to see you!"

The tone was a little patronizing, but Mrs Dunbar's tone had been that from the day when she ceased to be Jean Dent. Her round, red face was pleasant. Edith could have fallen in her arms and wept.

"Mrs—Jean! You're back in town?"

Koviloor Acadamy

"Yes. We got here only yesterday. We stayed at Seal Harbour till there wasn't another soul but ourselves left in the place. How are you and where have you been for the summer?"

("Does she know?" Edith was thinking. "Does she know and not care, or hasn't she heard yet?")

Aloud she said:

"I didn't go much of anywhere, except for a day or two now and then. There was business that——But, oh, it's been so dreadfully hot in town."

"So they tell me. They say it was better than Turkish baths. I think I'll have to stay in New York some summer to reduce. What a brute your husband is, keeping you here just because of his business. I thought artists could paint anywhere."

Edith opened her lips to tell the truth, but what came from them was a flow of nothings about August weather in the city. She was trying to divert Mrs Dunbar's attention from Jim.

She did divert it. They talked safely for quite five minutes and parted as they had met. Edith felt herself clinging to this woman—more than that: trying to commit her to a friendship that could survive the news of the divorce; and when Mrs Dunbar at last withdrew, Edith half believed that she had succeeded. She was grateful and jubilant. She was so jubilant that, presently finding in her path the apartment house that she had lived in with Jim and that Jim still lived in, she walked by it as if she were the Children of Israel circling doomed Jericho.

Effie Mitchell, who was once suspected of being not quite all that she should be, was coming out of the door. The summer had worked changes in Effie that raised suspicions to certainties. Of course, everybody carried a rouge-box and a lip-stick, these days; but Effie— And then her hair—

Edith, as she saw the girl's face brighten with glad recognition and forgetfulness of past snubs, felt a twinge of pity. There was in that look a pathos all the more poignant because it was unconscious. But Edith had just triumphed; she had nothing in common with this thing that Effie Mitchell had so patently become. There had never been a time when she did not scorn it, and to-day she scorned it more than ever. Besides, she was at present in a position in which she must be especially careful. People that did not know the facts were anxious to misinterpret anything they chanced to see, and

Koviloor Acadamy
people like the Dunbars would not care to know people that knew people like Effie.

"Mrs Trent?" said Effie.

But Edith pretended not to hear.

She went back to her own apartments and changed to her negligee, but she could not change her frame of mind and she was not wholly satisfied with herself. After all, she had had seen Effie only from the corner of her eye: perhaps Effie thought that she had not been seen at all. Edith hoped so. How could anybody expect to be recognised under such a ridiculous alteration of hair? And yet——

Edith lay down on the couch in the living-room and vainly tried to find something of interest in the newspapers that were heaped there. What she found, and what she fascinatedly read, was the report of a sermon by the only preacher she admired: a sermon by Bishop Peel denouncing divorce. It was impossible for an unworldly clergy to understand such matters! Edith choked on a wrathful sob. She threw down the paper.

She watched the clock on the mantelpiece. It ticked so fast and so loud, and yet its hands moved so slowly. Its regular sounds were like steady hammer-taps upon her brain. When the door-bell rang, she thought at first that it was the telephone. Diana Wentworth was calling—an epidemic of whooping-cough in the neighbourhood, she cheerfully said, had temporarily closed the branch library in which she was employed—and Edith absent-mindedly admitted her without realising that a visit would probably be a fresh annoyance, and that Diana must be got rid of before Charley let himself in with his tell-tale latch-key. All the gods of irritation appeared to be conspiring against her: it was an unendurable morning.

Diana sat down with a gentle sigh and the full tokens of remaining. Her gown was voluminous and velvet. Her violet eyes animated her pale, handsome face. She had met Edith in a department-store a week or two ago and was given this address.

"You've been reading the capitalistic newspapers," she said, shaking her head in sad improbation.

"There's nothing in them," returned Edith, viciously.

"There never is," said Diana. "Didn't you know that all their news is personally censored by Wall Street?"

Edith had a vision of Mr J. P. Morgan pruning galley-proofs in the secrecy of his own home at one o'clock in the

Koviloor Acadamy
morning. It was a brief vision; it could not be more, because she was too busy wondering how to get rid of Diana before Charley arrived.

"They print the most absurd things," she said, "and leave out all the real news that anybody does give them."

She was thinking of that column-long report of the sermon by Bishop Peel and of something that, in her opinion, should have taken the sermon's place. For an instant she was stopped short of the mention of these matters—stopped by the same fear of her acquaintances' opinion of her suit that had made her want to run away from Mrs Dunbar. She thanked heaven that Diana did not read the papers, and then she realised that, sooner or later, Diana must know at least the bare truth, too.

"How's Jim?" Diana was asking.

Quite calmly Edith's mood changed: she would tell it now. Here was a way of getting rid of her visitor—a desperate way, perhaps, but she was overcome by a temporary disgust of deception. Let Diana hear and flee.

"I don't know how he is," said Edith, tragically. "He doesn't live here. I—I'm going to divorce him."

The result was not what she had looked for. Diana leaned forward, her hands clasped, her violet eyes alight.

"How splendid of you!" she gasped.

Edith gasped in echo.

"What? You don't——" Then she thought she saw a light. "Of course," she said, "a wife's always the last to hear anything about her husband. I suppose you've known things about him for ever so long."

She was once more mistaken.

"N-no," said Diana. "I never heard anything of that sort, but I could see that he was the Conventional Type of husband, and the Conventional Type of husband is a tyrant. He has no Feeling for Freedom."

So it became clear. Diana was for Freedom; hence Diana was for Divorce. The merits of no particular case concerned her, nor the means. She placed everybody that she knew in what she called a Type, and Jim belonged to a Type that Diana disapproved of; but that mattered little where so great a principle as Divorce was concerned: had he been all that she admired, she would still have applauded Edith's action—one must demonstrate one's Principles; even at some slight personal inconvenience, it is each individual's duty to make

Koviloor Acadamy
some sort of Protest against the unendurable might of Convention. Divorce was a Popular Right, and Diana believed in helping along the progress of the Greatest-good-for-the-greatest-number. Doubtless she had often said exactly the same things before in Edith's hearing, but before Edith had never heeded them because they seemed unlikely ever to apply to her. The present application gave them an intimate interest.

"That's what he was," said Edith: "a—What do you call it? He had no—no——"

"Feeling for Freedom," breathed Diana. "I know the type."

"No Feeling for Freedom," Edith repeated. "That's it. He used to pretend to let me do what I wanted, and then, when it got me in any trouble, he'd pretend to be sweetly magnanimous. The way he wouldn't say it was my own fault simply shrieked, 'I told you so!'"

"Of course. I know them so well. He was entirely wrapped up in his own work, wasn't he? They all are."

"Jim never thought of anything else. He said he couldn't afford to. And such a thing to think about! If he'd only been in business! Why, he worked himself half to death, and could only make just enough for us to get along on."

"Without any interest in *your* work," Diana nodded.

Edith was in full swing now. Five minutes ago, she had been punctuating her sentences by glances at the clock, but now the injuries done her by Jim blotted out the memory of Charley.

"No interest at all in what I cared for," she said. "Of course, I hadn't any work but the housework. My father was a business man, and we weren't the sort of people that have to teach their daughters a trade. Sometimes I wish I had one."

"Housework is drudgery," Diana declared. She had settled back in her chair to enjoy in greater comfort the story of Edith's wrongs. She added: "Even in an apartment and with a maid."

"And he wouldn't play cards, contract—not even auction," pursued Edith, "or dance. He wouldn't do anything at all—for *me*. He'd hardly ever go anywhere with me in the evenings—not even to the theatre—because he said he had to be up early to use the morning light for his painting."

She ran on at length. She went through the catalogue of her woes. "And all this summer," she concluded, "he's been leading a perfectly immaculate life—do you know why? Simply to make it harder for me to get evidence."

Koviloor Academy
"That's so like them," smiled Diana. "And of course with these silly man-made laws that we still have, you must get such a lot of evidence, mustn't you? Well, the time will come when we'll change all that. A woman will have the Right to her own soul. When a wife wants to leave her Slavery, she will do it by what Archibald Hodge calls the Divine Prerogative of Womanhood."

Edith did not follow this, but the name of its author caught her ear.

"Who is Archibald Hodge?" she asked.

She could not have asked anything, it immediately appeared, that Diana more delighted to answer. Her face was transfigured as she told of Hodge.

He was the Splendid Type. With a glorious body he combined an intellect that was as Mt. Everest among foothills. "He is so thoroughly emancipated," said Diana, "that his mind is positively—positively naked." Hodge had simplified Simplified Spelling. He had passed upward through Socialism to Anarchism and thence to a political economy of his own making: the Hyper-individualism. He had made a synthesis of Einstein and Dorsey, added to it the Vital Principle that these two philosophers so conspicuously lacked, and called it Hodgeism. Those were his lesser achievements. As you cared to look at it, he threw them off by the way or hewed them as foundation-stones for his Great Work. His Great Work was the confutation of mere Feminism and the creation of his own system to which he had given the simple name of Womanism.

"Womanism," Diana explained, "is—well, it is the Absolute Freedom of Woman. It recognises that Woman, as the Life-Giver, should be the Life-Ruler."

"Yes," said Edith, a trifle vaguely. "But what does he do?"

"He preaches his Gospel," said Diana.

"Oh! He has money of his own?"

Hodge had not. He was one of the lilies of the radical field. How did he live? His friends were only too glad to support him. They were supporting him while he wrote his Great Work—in twenty volumes. When he had written it, they themselves would publish it. Sylvia Tytus had started the subscription: she was the secretary of the New Radical Club. Edith ought to come around to the New Radical Club; it was a wonderful place for the exchange of ideas.

Koviloor Acadamy

"And Sylvia," said Diana, "is just one of the finest types of woman that ever lived. She has the clearest soul I ever knew. There's nothing that she hasn't done or wouldn't do. She is simply a pure diamond that reflects the light of every known emotion and yet remains its untainted self. She's a splendid speaker, and she's radiantly beautiful."

Edith's attention began to wander and her thoughts to return to the tardy Charley; but Diana ran on, telling how the Womanist League, under the direction of Hodge and Sylvia Tytus, was launching the propaganda that was to convert the world and set up Woman as the earth's ruler. Her practical hostess came back to herself, only to ask how long would be required for the conversion.

Diana looked about her as if suspecting Philistine eavesdroppers. She lowered her voice to a discouraged whisper.

"We Americans are so afraid of any sort of novelty or of any new methods that," she confessed, "I have periods when I feel as if it must take a long while." She shook her head. "A long, long while," she repeated, sadly. "But, of course, I never mention that to Him."

She did not want to talk about this. Intentions were far more interesting to her, and to them she glibly reverted.

Edith was glad, now, that Charley was late: the later he was, the less chance there would be of Diana meeting him and guessing their intimacy. She was roused by another word of her visitor.

". . . the barbarism of the married-state," Diana was saying. "There will be no marriage in Our World."

"You don't mean that you won't marry?"

"Only free unions," said Diana, "terminable at the desire of either party."

"But," said Edith, "that's—why, that's what they call Free Love!"

"Exactly."

Edith was shocked.

"I think," she said, sharply, "that that's simply disgusting."

Diana tried to be tolerant; she tried to explain. Freedom, she said, was the essence of Love, and Love was the essence of Freedom.

"Do you mean to tell me," Edith asked, "that if you were married to a man——"

"O, my dear, I wouldn't *marry!*"

Koviloor Acadamy
"Well, then, living with a man." Edith loathed the phrase. "Do you mean to tell me that if you were living with a man, you would let him be in love with other women?"

"I should scorn to shackle him," said Diana. "And, as for what it meant to myself, it would be a test of my Type, a proof of my Emancipation."

It was what the actors call "a good exit-line," and Diana, to Edith's final relief, used it as her departing word.

When her guest had gone, the hostess gathered up the newspapers and looked at the clock. Charley was very late. She was no longer glad that he was late: she was angry. She was angry at Diana, too, for thinking that love was a minor passion and less than holy; yet she was also angry because a man of whom she had thought so highly as she had thought of Bishop Peel could utter a sweeping condemnation of all divorce.

§ 4. And now, to Charley beside her, she was repeating:

"Why doesn't Schultz send us word?"

Charley, bending to kiss her, checked himself.

"I suppose," he said, "the judge hasn't handed down the decree yet."

The white knuckles of Edith's right hand tapped the back of the couch impatiently. She made an obvious effort at self-control.

"How is your father this morning?"

"Not so well: he had a bad night."

"I'm sorry."

"Yes." Charley spoke in his dual rôle of the sympathetic son and the man of the world. "But of course he'll never be any better."

Edith caught her breath.

"How *can* you talk that way? Your own father!"

Above everything else, she feared death. She regarded it as the greatest evil. It was so terrible that she could not wish it even for Jim.

"Well," said Charley, "that's the fact, anyhow. Dr Morley hasn't told Mame yet, but he admitted it to me yesterday. I don't want him to die; I'd do anything I could to save him, only there isn't anything to be done." It was the moment to say so much as must he said: "He don't like you, Edith."

Edith's beautiful eyes showed her pain.

"I know," she said. "I did my best, but he never cared

Koviloor Acadamy
much about me. I must try again, that's all. I hope," she quickly added, "it hasn't turned him against you?"

"Would it—" Charley gulped at the lump in his throat. He looked at her in high appeal. He would venture the hypothetical question. "Would it matter to you, dear, if he did turn against me?"

It was Edith who now made the advance. She put out a hand and lightly touched his cheek.

"You silly boy! Of course it wouldn't. But he won't turn—and we do have to have some money to live on, don't we?"

Charley understood her. Before his memory there flashed the picture of that first-floor bedroom of the house in Lexington Avenue: the mahogany washstand and bureau, the marble mantelpiece, the big bed and the bald, yellow man with the beak nose and the keen grey eyes, who lay there. Charley was in love and so he lied freely.

"Well," he said, "it hasn't set him against me, anyhow. Three-fourths of the estate, you know, go to me under the present will, and there's no chance of a change." The chance, he reflected, really was small: he had only to keep his secret from his father. A little more preparation of Edith's mind for what he meant to tell her after their marriage was, however, necessary, and so he went on: "The way he happened to speak about you was——Did you see the papers this morning?"

"Yes," said Edith.

"Then you saw—Didn't you see what was in them about the suit?"

"Yes."

Charley's mind dodged from its consideration of effects to a complaint against their cause.

"It was rotten luck. I don't see why that had to happen. I don't see how they ever got hold of it. We'd all been so careful."

"I gave it to the papers," said Edith coolly.

His arm fell away from her.

"You—Edith, what are you talking about?"

"I did," she said. She looked at him belligerently. "I was sick and tired of everybody thinking Jim such a saint and me—the other thing."

Charley was overcome. He could only stutter:

"Wh-why, how could they think anything about the case when they hadn't heard of it?"

Koviloor Academy
"They'll have to know sometime, won't they?"

"Yes, but not now."

"I don't care. I wanted to be the first to talk. I wanted people to know what Jim really is. I couldn't stand it any longer. So I called up the papers on the telephone. It was last night after you brought me home." Her wrath weakened. "Why didn't you stay the way you used to? I asked you to stay. If you'd stayed, I wouldn't have done it. But I was lonely and I got to thinking——" She surrendered to a sob. "And the horrid things wouldn't print a line except just to say that there was a suit for divorce! Not one fact against Jim—not one. He must have fixed them all long ago. He thinks of everything; he has friends on all the papers. He'd say he did it to save me from publicity! Save me—after the way he's forced me into court!"

Tears had her now. She was crying on Charley's shoulder, and Charley thought of nothing but some means to comfort her.

He patted her hands; he stroked her hair.

"It's all right," he murmured. "It don't matter. We'll let them all know some day. It's all right. It didn't do any harm; really, it didn't."

Edith did not raise her head, but her sense of the practical was reasserting itself.

"He didn't think I was awful—your father, I mean?" she asked.

"Oh, he's just old-fashioned. It'll be all right."

"But there's Mame. She might grab this as her chance to——"

Charley's chuckle was honest:

"Mame? You don't half know Mame, or you wouldn't talk like that. She's all for me. Mame don't count."

Edith clutched his hands.

"Are you sure? Are you *sure* your father won't turn against you, Charley?"

What else could he seem to be? "Of course I am," he said. "I've got a scheme. It'll be all right." He was trembling; he wished that he dared to ask for a drink. "Just you wait. You'll see. And, anyhow, there's always the invention."

"But you said yesterday it had been so hard to get the right people about that; and you said we needed money in the meantime."

"We'll get the money. I tell you I have a scheme to fix poppa. We'll interest capital in no time now. Then we'll be

Koviloor Acadamy

more than well-to-do: we'll be rich. I remember once when I was working in the Government telegraph office in Peking——"

He believed in his radio-receiver. He believed that, even should his father live long enough to discover the necessity of carrying out the threat of a new will, that mechanism would save the day. But he would not now have dared to make matters clear to Edith; he wanted to be sure of her, and his love for her was of such a sort that the more he loved the less certain of her he could be. So he fell to diverting her attention by the kind of narrative that she most enjoyed: the stories of adventures in the strange lands in which, as a wandering inventor under passing parental displeasure, he had spent five years of his life.

She listened to him, her head raised again, but her eyes were for the telephone. Her inner ear sat alert for the first tinkle of the bell that would announce their freedom.

Charley broke off in the middle of a description of a midnight ride through the Boxer lines.

"But I can't talk about that now," he said. "This is too much like waiting for the jury to come in."

"The jury?" Edith found the simile ominous. "When there's a jury there's some doubt, isn't there? But in our case—— You don't mean that anything might upset our plans?"

Charley was too nervous wholly to conceal his fears. If he could only have a drink!

"N-no," he said. "But it's always just possible that, somehow or other, word might get to the judge——"

"How can it?"

"It's not likely. But, you know, Edith, some of these judges are just old women; and if this fellow happened to learn that you and I—that we——"

"He can't learn that. Nobody suspects. I'm called Mrs Trent here, but not Mrs James Trent. Nobody in this house knows who I am."

"Well, then, he might find some flaw in the testimony."

"There isn't any flaw."

"Yes, I know; but maybe it's too flawless. Sometimes I wonder if it isn't so flawless that it sounds faked."

Edith's brows contracted.

"We had to do that," she protested. "Schultz himself said so. Over half of it he suggested to us by his questions—he

Koviloor Acadamy
and Leishman. It was their fault. They both were always saying we couldn't win unless we did swear to what we did swear to. You know, Charley, how they led us on. We just couldn't prove what was true, so we had to prove what wasn't. You honestly don't suppose——" Her underlip trembled. "Charley!" she sobbed.

Again he took her into his arms and comforted her. He denied all the fears that he had so lately expressed. He kissed her, at first tenderly and then, as her red lips responded, with more and more fervour.

Of that contact was born something that banished fear. Fear was banished and within them rose, beating in their temples and tugging at their throats, the passion that had drawn them together, the desire, so often temporarily satisfied but never permanently satiated, which, beginning in the days when Edith Trent considered herself the neglected wife of an artist too much engrossed in his art, had dragged the one of them through the divorce court, had turned the other to bear false witness, and had brought them both to this apartment and this waiting for a judgment in favour of all that they had done.

Vanaman's right arm was wound about her waist with a grip of steel; his left was round her firm neck, her head was thrown against the heaped cushions of the couch; her black hair half veiled her glowing cheeks, her panting bosom, her parted lips, her burning eyes. There was, for them, no reason for denial; during a year and more denial had been unknown between them. Charley bent his face; his mouth closed on hers. He held her tighter. He drew back only to gasp her name:

"Edith!"

A bell rang. It was crisp, clear. It was from the world that they were forgetting. It was as if the walls of their room had fallen and left these lovers visible to all that world.

They leapt asunder.

Charley, in a trembling voice, swore an habitual oath. The woman was more collected.

"The 'phone!" she said with quick realisation. "That's Schultz."

She sprang up; but Charley was before her.

"Not you!" she cried. "It mustn't be a man's voice from my rooms."

She was too late: Charley was at the telephone. If his

Koviloor Acadamy

hand had shaken when, a few hours earlier, he began to telephone to Edith, it shook more violently now; but he lost no time.

"Hello! Hello! Hello!" he said.

In the little black receiver at his ear the answer danced and rattled.

"Hello!" said the answer. "Hudson one-two-nine-three?"

"Yes."

"Mrs Trent there?"

"Yes, yes."

(Edith pleaded: "Make *him* say who *he* is,"—but Charley did not hear her.)

"Ask her to the 'phone, please."

"This is Mr Vanaman," said Charley with what dignity he could get into his tone.

"Oh!" begged Edith, but she could say no more. She could not wrench the receiver from his hand. She could scarcely breathe in this atmosphere that she herself had charged with surveillance and deception.

The black receiver, however, was firm.

"I want to talk to Mrs Trent," it persisted.

"Who is this?" asked Charley.

"Mr Schultz, her lawyer," said the receiver.

"Well, won't I do?"

"You will not. I talked to you once before this morning, and that's enough for the day. You've had too much to do with this case already, Mr Vanaman. I want to talk to my client, and I won't talk to anybody else."

Charley put his fat, pink palm over the transmitter and held the receiver toward Edith.

"It's Schultz," he said, his lips pale and his voice shaking. "He wants to talk to you."

Edith tottered forward. She, too, was pale.

"Charley," she whispered, "it's not—Oh, you don't think it's bad news?"

He tried to say, "I don't know," but, though his lips moved, he said nothing.

Now she was afraid to go to the telephone. What did that sullen black tube hold for her?

"Won't he talk to you, please?"

Charley shook his head.

She had to take the receiver that he held out to her.

"This is Mrs Trent, Mr Schultz," said she, and a moment

Koviloor Acadamy
later she congratulated herself that it was she alone who heard the form of the lawyer's answer.

"Mrs Trent," said the distant attorney, in a slow, even tone, "I want to say, first of all, that I took this case because of my friendship for your dead father, and once in it I held on. This is not my sort of practice, and you know it. If I had not been too deeply committed before I knew where I was, I'd have got out of it long ago. I'd have got out, anyhow, if your husband had fought the suit. Never mind about my fee: I couldn't touch a penny of it. Now that this thing is over, I merely want to tell you that I thoroughly understand what you and that fellow Vanaman have done to an innocent man—thoroughly. The court has just signed your decree. I'm sending up a certified copy by messenger. You are a free woman. Good-bye."

§ 5. For a few seconds after the lawyer had rung off, Edith, paler still, stood with the receiver pressed to her ear. It was only slowly that indignation came to her rescue. Why, even if the first lies had begun with them and been amplified and improved by Leishman, this Schultz had hinted that they must continue: it was an open secret between them.

She hung up the receiver and turned to her lover.

He was looking at her. His wide mouth was half open, and his eyes gaped. She had never before thought that he might appear grotesque.

"What—what is it?" he mumbled. "What did he say?"

"Nothing," she answered, speaking calmly now. "Nothing—except that the decree has been signed—and he feels so under obligations to my father that he can't take any money. We can do what we've been planning to do: we can be married quietly over in Jersey City this afternoon."

With a strident shout, he tottered toward her. He opened his arms. She leaned to him, but, as they met, something seemed to have gone out of them. The kisses that the telephone bell had interrupted had no repetition. His arms, instead of encircling her, drooped, and only his hands met hers. He raised her hands between his own. They stood looking at each other. Slowly he lifted her fingers to his lips. His lips were cold.

"Where's the whisky?" he asked. "I think we deserve just one more drink from your bootlegger. Let's celebrate this once. We've earned it."

Koviloor Acadamy

FIFTH CHAPTER

AMERICANS believe in divorce and mistrust the divorced. At least, they mistrust them so much that it behooves a petitioner to place all the blame on the shoulders of the respondent.

Edith Trent and Charley Vanaman had inherited neither enough wealth nor enough social position to brave conventions and achieve the leisured walks of American life. They were conventional people wanting to do conventionally a still more or less unconventional thing. To do it they had, therefore, tacitly recognised the necessity of a conspiracy that would leave Jim in the position of a brutal and libertine husband and show Edith to the world as a long-suffering wife protected by a wholly chivalrous friend.

They had succeeded. They had accomplished the perfect perjury. Jim had kept his word; and now, with the signing of the divorce decree in Edith's favour, Jim, as a real presence, should have vanished from the existence of his wife and the lover of his wife. A vindicated woman, Edith was free to go where her heart listed; Charley's reputation was, at least legally, sustained. They were sincerely, even tremendously, in love with each other; with no faith in the theory—with no knowledge of it—that a successful fraud cannot be a bond between its perpetrators, but must always be a barrier because it is a fraud, they felt that they had but to marry in order to accomplish conventional happiness.

And they were married. They were married on the afternoon of the day that brought the news of Edith's freedom. Somewhat amazedly, Charley found himself borne off, by his own desires as much as by Edith's, to Jersey City, where they had all along planned to go for the legalisation of their union. This could escape the New York newspapers; Edith wanted to escape the New York newspapers now.

They stood in a shabby little office before a shabby man at a high desk. There were some ragged books on the desk; at one side of it was a railed space and at the other the witness-

Kovilpor Academy
chair; behind a couple of tables was a row of benches discoloured by a generation of audiences. The wall decorations were handbills picturing wretched faces and offering rewards for their originals: the law promised to pay well for the evidence that would send these furtive men to jail. It was a room used for the trials of petty offenders, and every morning it was filled by drunken derelicts, pickpockets, and prostitutes. The man at the desk had a blue nose and the room reeked with the magisterial odour.

Here Edith and Charley were married. The blue-nosed man propounded to them, in a matter-of-fact voice, those intimate and impertinent interrogations prescribed by statute. Edith answered with burning cheeks and Charley with a nervous chuckle. The formalities concerning residence had been attended to a week since; the certified copy of the divorce-degree was required, produced, and barely glanced at. One or two more queries were put and answered.

"That's all," said the man with the blue nose.

"Eh?" said Charley.

"You're married," said the blue-nosed official.

He grinned.

§ 2. Husband and wife left the magistrate's office in silence. To each of them this legal ceremony had seemed lacking in the dignity that their ceremonial souls and their warm affection counted requisite. Their nerves had, for a long time, been on an ugly tension, for the details of the divorce had been more trying, the need of falsehood more frequent, than they had anticipated, and now their exit was not, they felt, of the sort that is generally supposed to be hymeneal.

"Well," said Edith, "that's settled, anyhow."

Charley nodded, and for a moment neither spoke. Then the man looked at the woman, and, feeding on her, his enthusiasm revived.

"I think," he chuckled, as she took his arm, which bent to compress her clasping fingers, "we ought to celebrate this somehow. What do you say to a bottle of champagne—just one—between us?"

Edith's reply was more matter-of-fact than sentimental:

"I think it would do me good," she said.

They had it as soon as they reached New York. They went to a quiet and discreet Italian restaurant in Houston Street,

Koviloor Acadamy
where champagne could be bought if the ambitious customer were known as "safe," and where Charley was well remembered. The ground floor room in which they sat was full of mirrors, but, save for Edith and Charley, the mirrors reflected only the figures of three tired and inattentive waiters.

Charley raised his glass and clinked it against hers. Then he turned the glass so that their fingers touched.

"Here," he said— "here's to *us!*"

Her eyes met his, and glowed.

"To us," she softly echoed.

"Long life and happiness!" said Charley.

"And success!" she added, smiling. "Don't forget the success of the invention, dear."

He drained his glass; she sipped from hers. For some time they talked of the indifferent things that are so important to lovers. They talked until the bottle was empty.

"Let's have another," suggested Charley.

"No, thank you."

"Aw, come on. Most fellows aren't married but once in a lifetime."

Edith winced. She knew that his words had contained no intended reference to her, but her voice was hard as she replied:

"I thought you were going to quit drinking?"

"I am. But *to-day*——"

It was merely her smile that interrupted him.

"All right," he said, "you'll see. Only I *am* nervous. Marriage is a new thing to me."

How could he stumble on such phrases?

"I don't want you to have anything more to drink," she said.

She reverted to the last subject of their talk, and Charley did his best to listen, but he was indeed nervous. He fidgeted in his chair.

"I've been thinking," said Edith at last, "about where we're going to live. We've got to find a place in a day or two. There's been no time to look, with this suit going on, and not much time to talk, but I've been thinking."

"Eh?" said Charley. He rose. "Excuse me a moment," he said.

He hurried to a tiny bar concealed behind a wash-room, where he took a large drink of green Scotch whisky, neat. He was preparing to tell her what, sooner or later, he would have

Koviloor Acadamy
had to tell her, but, since he had all along taken it for granted that they would live for a time at Edith's present apartments, he had still hoped to postpone the date of his disclosure.

"Of course," on his return Edith placidly continued, "as I said last week, I understand how it is that, just now, you can't leave town because of the invention, and that's why I told you I don't a bit mind making our wedding journey a stay at some good hotel; but while we're there I'll have to look around for some nice apartments."

It was characteristic of him not to have reintroduced this subject; it was characteristic of her silently to have reflected a great deal about it, and, assuming it her own province, to have reintroduced it now.

"What's the matter with the apartments that you have?" asked Charley. "They're swell enough, aren't they?"

"Oh, we can't live there. I thought you understood that."

"What's wrong with the place?"

"Nothing, dear; but everybody there has seen you coming and going since I first moved in."

"Well?"

"Well, we'd better live somewhere where the people don't know too much about these last few months."

The reason seemed sufficient, as Edith's reasons always were; but it left Charley embarrassed.

"We can't live at poppa's," he said, a little awkwardly.

The brown stars that were her eyes searched him quickly.

"I wouldn't think of doing that. I always said no one man's house was big enough to hold two families. But that's not your reason. What is your reason?"

Charley wriggled. He felt it was too bad that a difference should arise at such a time, and Edith agreed with him. Nevertheless, the first fervour of passion had preceded even the divorce; they were not, in the ordinary sense, newly-married people, and this difficulty, but dimly apprehended on the one side and quietly concealed on the other, had at once somehow to be resolved.

"You know well enough how things are at my place," said Charley.

"You mean your father doesn't like me?"

"I mean he's old-fashioned and prejudiced. You always understood how it was."

"That was before there was the—before I was divorced, dear—and it was before we were married."

Koviloor Acadamy

Charley laughed softly:

"A couple of hours ago."

"Yes; but whatever your father used to think of me, I'm his son's wife now."

He pressed her hand. "Of course you are—forever and forever. But you've got to remember that, according to the old man's notions, we're sort of sudden."

Edith's manner did not change. Her gaze was steady, and, as she turned the empty glass between her fingers, her hand was steady, too; but her sensitive nostrils dilated and her voice was dry as, looking into his eyes, she said quietly:

"You haven't told him that you meant to marry me?"

Here was something she had not expected, had not understood. Thoroughly aware of the elder Vanaman's disapprobation of her, she was wholly convinced that he would not immediately like this hurried match. She quite agreed that he had better be kept in ignorance of his son's project until that project was accomplished; but she counted on overcoming the old man's prejudice against her by a personal appeal after the wedding, and she took it for granted that the opportunity for a personal appeal would be given her.

Charley was saying:

"You know I didn't mean him to know beforehand."

"Yes," said Edith, "but it's not beforehand now. You don't mean you were going to try to keep our marriage a secret from your own family?"

She could not bear the infliction of the insult implied. She was tired of evasions. It was well enough, perhaps, to avoid the newspapers, since Jim seemed to have so many friends on the newspaper staffs; in order to avoid the newspapers she had, in the quiet of her own mind, decided against sending out formal announcements. But she was tired of purely unnecessary evasions. The divorce had been given to her, not to Jim; she was a lawfully married woman, and she would hide from no more Mrs Dunbars—the Mrs Dunbars would accept her only if she were straightforward with them. Still less would she hide from Charley's own family. Oh, she could bring the old man 'round and keep his will intact: she could do that better as Charley's acknowledged wife than Charley could do it as a supposed bachelor. Edith could scarcely believe that her husband would want to conceal his marriage.

Charley continued to wriggle in his chair. Had the moment indeed come?

Koviloor Acadamy
"Oh, Edith, you don't understand—or rather, you won't. You know perpectly well that we——"

"How did you think you could hide it from him?"

He was trying hard to do what he had meant to do, trying hard to state his terms and state them clearly; but he could not do it. Her glance was strange: he could not do it.

"I wasn't going to hide it from him. I wanted it to be over and done with before I told him, that's all. Don't you see?"

"But you were going to put off telling him for a few days? You weren't going to tell him right away?"

"Oh, well, Edith, you must see for yourself that if we only waited till——"

Edith rose from the table. Her eyes looked like the brown agate marbles that he used to play with when he was a small boy.

"We'll go up and tell your father now," she said.

Koviloor Acadamy

SIXTH CHAPTER

As they came up the steps of the Vanaman house, Mame opened the door to them.

"I was listening for you," she said to Charley. "I wanted——"

Then her near-sighted gaze recognised her brother's companion and her vapid face twitched.

"You—won't you both come into the parlour?" she asked.

She led the way to the dim room, furnished in the style of the 'Seventies. Charley, who had had a terrible ride uptown—a silent ride, during which he had succumbed in every struggle to conjure the courage requisite for facing Edith's anger with the facts in his case—was rather glad of the respite, but he asked:

"How's father?"

Mame blinked.

"That's what I was looking for you to tell you about," she said. "He's——" Again she realised the catastrophe of Edith's presence. She had an illuminating flash. "You didn't—you didn't want to see him?" she faltered.

"Of course I did."

"But he's—he's very low, Charley. He had a sort of sinking-spell after you left this morning." The words came with a rush now. "Besides, when he got a little better he made me—I don't know why—telephone for Mr Zoller."

"What!" said Charley. His jaw dropped.

Brother and sister were standing, but Edith had sat down on the horsehair sofa that reminded her so much of the sofa in her Uncle Morty's wandering parlour at Ayton.

"Who's Mr Zoller?" she repeated.

"You know him: the lawyer," explained Charley. He tossed the words over his shoulder at her. "Is he up there now Mame?"

Mame nodded.

Edith started to rise. The situation was revealing to her what Charley had been afraid to reveal.

Koviloor Acadamy

"Charley——" she began.

But Charley raised his hand.

"Just a moment, please," he said. "Is it——" He wet his dry lips. "Is it a new will, Mame?"

"No. At least I don't think it is, Charley." She looked helplessly from her brother to Edith. "But he's in no condition to be interrupted, whatever it is. Not even by you. Certainly not by—— That is, if you don't mind—if Mrs Trent will excuse——"

Edith got up. She came a step forward and put out her hand. Her face was kindly.

"If I can be of any help," she said, "you must give me a chance. I am not Mrs Trent any more. I have been granted a divorce from that terrible man, and I am your brother's wife, my dear."

Poor Mame's face showed something uncommonly close to horror. Her features seemed flattened, as if from a blow. Behind her thick spectacles, her pale eyes blinked piteously.

"His—you're married?" She did not see Edith's proffered hand. Her frightened gaze sought her brother. "Oh, Charley!" she whispered.

Charley had fallen back at Edith's announcement, a not very dignified figure. Now, however, action was forced on him. He feared his father's disapproval, but that silent ride uptown had taught him to fear his wife's anger more. He had to interfere. Besides, he really did not want to see the woman he loved treated in any but the most cordial manner.

"Of course we're married," said he. His tone was not the ideally triumphant one in which a new-made bridegroom is supposed to announce his changed estate, but neither was it accompanied by the sheepish smile that, in practice, usually accompanies such declarations. His voice carried a challenge.

Mame fairly swayed.

"But, Charley——" she protested.

"Just a moment, *please!* Why are you surprised? You must have known all along that I intended to do this." He remembered that it always paid to keep the upper hand with Mame. "I made it as clear to you as I could without—without saying it in so many words before Edith was legally free of the brute that had been her husband. Mame"—he looked at her threateningly—"aren't you glad?"

Mame was ready for tears; but she fought bravely with her impulse and overcame it. Murmuring some platitude about

Koviloor Acadamy
her pleasure, and seeking to excuse her embarrassment by a word as to the suddenness of this news, she took Edith's hand at last; she even touched with her lips the cheek of her sister-in-law.

Edith was radiant. She returned the caress warmly.

"I love him," she whispered, and she blushed prettily as she whispered it.

The entrance of a negro saved Mame from immediate reply.

"Mr Vanaman's asking for you, Miss Vanaman," said the servant. "He wants you right away."

Charley caught Edith's eye.

"Shall I go along?" he asked.

At that Mame's face grew utterly white. She gasped in unconcealed terror.

"It wouldn't do," she said as soon as she was sure that the servant was out of hearing. "It'd be the worst thing for both of you. You know you're counting on his help to finance the invention, and if you told him—— Forgive me, Edith, but he's an old man, and if Charley——"

Charley had the easy bravery which comes with the belief that we have burned the last of our bridges behind us.

"I'll do what I like," he snorted.

"No, no," Mame implored him. "You know how upset he was by your talk this morning. If he saw you again, he might have another sinking-spell."

"He's my father," said Charley, doggedly.

It was the amazing Edith who came to Mame's rescue. She saw the practical danger and changed her plans instantly.

"I think your sister is right," she declared. She nodded calmly to Mame, who, her victory shorn of some of its pleasure because it was bought by another woman's influence over Charley, hurried upstairs and left husband and wife together.

§ 2. Charley's amazement kept him, for quite a minute, speechless. Essentially a timid man, he had known, and them but slightly, only a few women, and knowing a few women slightly, he of course reduced his scanty knowledge to a set of simple rules and so concluded that he knew Woman well. Here, however, were all his rules broken—and by the woman that he had supposed he knew best of all her kind. Edith, with whom he had carried on a long liaison, with whom he had planned, and brought to a triumphant issue under heavy

Koviloor Academy
difficulties, a conspiracy that the civil law at best but winked at and that moral law in which they had been reared condemned—Edith, whom he had married, was a mystery. Hither he had reluctantly come at her bidding. Their entire future lay in the balance; his father might be dying. She had ordered him; he obeyed, and now—— He flung his hands above his head with a gesture of fatuous despair. When he spoke it was without thought: it was not so much a question that he put as it was a picture of his own bewilderment and of that action of hers which had amazed him:

"Why did you do that?"

"Can't you see, dear?" she parried.

He was uncertain as to the advisability of pressing her: he had lately mastered the proverb about sleeping dogs. He was worried by Zoller's presence in the house, and, to do him justice, by his father's relapse. Nevertheless, this seemed a time to have things out, so he answered:

"No, I can't see. One minute you want me to come up here and face them, and the next you hold me off. I can't see it at all."

If Edith needed anything to justify to herself her change of front—and she was not generally a woman to feel the need of extraneous justification—Charley's words were that thing. This was not the Charley she had known, and only severe stress could so have changed him.

"It's because you've converted me to your view," she said. She stilled his annoyance by the touch of her slim hand upon his arm. "You and your sister and the whole situation in this house. I didn't realise it till I got here. Somebody used to say that I never could understand a stone-wall until I had struck my head against it. I've struck this stone-wall now."

The quotation, or the confession that it was a quotation, proved unfortunate. Charley's annoyance revived. It broke the fences of his new discretion.

"Who used to say that?" he inquired.

"Never mind who, dear. The point is that it's the truth."

"I suppose it was Jim."

She had not quoted Jim; she had quoted another man—a man that Charley had not known. It was over the first cocktail she ever drank at Sherry's that George Mertcheson vouchsafed that judgment of her. She could still have recalled the glitter of the room—it and the glitter of his glance, then both

Koviloor Acadamy
so novel to her—but she could also forget them, and she had chosen to forget. No, it was not at all Jim; nevertheless she understood that to say so would entail explanations.

"What if it was Jim?" she asked. "You don't have to be told what I think of him."

"I know I don't; but I'm sick and tired of hearing of him. I don't want ever to have to think of him again."

Edith kissed her husband.

"You won't have to think of him ever again," she promised. "And now do try to see why I kept you down here in the parlour. I guessed well enough from what your sister said that you had some little quarrel with your father about me this morning, and I know how much our whole future depends on keeping his goodwill. Oh, I know you only deceived me to save my feelings and I forgive you for that! But I've found it out now, and so I tell you you've converted me, dear, to your opinion of what we ought to do."

She spoke truly enough there. Brought face to face with the actual conditions of the Vanaman household—a household with which she had never been intimate, and to which she had been almost a stranger since its head began to suspect his son's liking for her—she realised the folly of the anger and defiance that had forced her to demand her husband's immediate acknowledgment of her new status to old Vanaman. Charley lived on the paternal allowance; he built his future on the expected success of the radio invention, and his only present hope of floating that invention lay in a winning over of his father to a faith in him and the receiver equal to his own faith. Some hint of these facts Charley had long since trailed before her, but it was coloured by the sanguine belief in his own ingenuity that forms the aura of every inventor; the full extent of the father's power and the inability of her charms to overcome his prejudices were not brought home to Edith until she now heard in Mame's tones the terror inspired by Charley's implied determination to tell the elder Vanaman of the marriage.

Edith's new point of view was what, had he dared to want it, Charley would most have wanted; but it had come too suddenly for him to feel grateful for it; he was still numbed by the blows that had preceded it. Charley's sort of man, when chance gives him a victory, knows in his heart that chance and not his own valour has won him the day, and so Charley's sort of man is not magnanimous.

Koviloor Acadamy

"I wish you could have been converted sooner," grumbled Charley.

"How could I, dear? You didn't say that he'd cut you out of his will if I—if we married."

"Oh, he won't cut me out of his will if I'm only given a little time to break this to him gently," said Charley. Since chance had been so far kind, he felt justified in counting on it further.

"Then you shall have the time," Edith answered: she never did things by halves. She put her arms about his neck. "I'll be good. I'll leave you to go up to him when he's stronger, and I'll run along and meet you at the Ritz for dinner. My bag's packed and can be sent for from there. At eight o'clock, dear. Don't be late, but do remember how much depends on your being nice to your father. We'll keep it all quiet—until you can bring him 'round." She guessed what that might mean, but she feared that rebellion would mean a new Vanaman will. She would hurry now; she, too, would burn her bridges. She added: "And find out, if you can, what he wanted to see his lawyer about."

She kissed Charley again and left him. He saw her to the door—which they opened quietly for fear that the sick man would hear them and ask questions of Mame—and then, returning alone to the gloomy parlour, began to pace up and down the length of the room.

Taking Edith's change at its face value, as he now saw that he would have perforce to take it, the world, or the world as Charley's tired brain projected it, was still a chaos. Could he indeed keep his marriage secret? He could not wish his father's death, yet even if Edith did not tire of waiting, there were the newspapers and the tongues of gossip, to be dreaded; there were all the dangers that Edith had immediately seen and that he had for so long a time been blind to. He was beginning to learn what most of us are as slow to learn: that marriage, in the accepted sense of that word, means the foundation of one family at the cost of the disruption of another and more often two other families. Do what he would, it must be his father against Edith. Mame, of course, did not count, but the others—— If Jim had never come into Edith's life, everything would have been so easy. This, however indirectly, was Jim's work.

Charley had to have a drink. Since the start of his father's illness, he had been keeping a bottle in the dining-room side-

Koviloor Acadamy
board. The dining-room opened upon the parlour through sliding doors. He tiptoed out and poured himself some whisky —a good deal of whisky. The first drink did not at once affect him, so he took a second.

He still had the empty glass in his hand when he heard somebody come rapidly down the front stairs to go out to the street. Was it Zoller? Charley ran to the parlour window; but Mame had brought from Carmel the habit of keeping the lower inner shutters closed: the wood was warped; the shutters stuck; by the time that Charley had them open the person that had gone out was nowhere to be seen.

He crept to the first-floor landing and put his ear to the keyhole of the door of his father's bedroom. There was a buzz of three voices inside—a woman's and two men's. He could distinguish nothing more than that. He dared not go in. He had to return to the parlour and walk and wait.

§ 3. Mame returned at last. She was crying.

"Well?" demanded Charley.

"He's only a little better," said Mame. "Dr Morley was there, that's why they wanted me."

"Was Zoller still with him?"

"He was about just going when I came up. Dr Morley says—I asked him right out, Charley, for I thought anything was better than this suspense—and he says he may live several months—father may, I mean—but that"—her sobs shook her —"but that it can't have any end except—except——"

Charley Vanaman bent and kissed his sister. Her news was no news to him, but he had not thought that the doctor would break it to her so soon.

"I'm sorry, Mame," he said; "but, after all, it's only what we've really expected. We must just do the best we can to make him comfortable in the meantime."

Mame looked up, mopping her reddened eyes.

"If you only hadn't m-married at just this time!"

"You don't understand," said Charley.

"Perhaps I don't, but you can hardly expect me to approve of her, Charley."

His nerves would not endure much more.

"You've got to remember," he said, "that Edith is my wife now."

"I do. I'm going to try to. I know she has her good points. She's well, she's very well dressed, anyhow. But

Koviloor Acadamy
Charley, with poppa feeling about her the way he does, and your invention not making money, how can you think——"

"Stop it!" snapped Charley.

She stopped, and he forced himself to recall the matters that were immediately pressing. Presently he asked:

"Didn't you find out what he wanted with Zoller?"

Mame shook her head.

"They wouldn't let me know, and afterward, just now, I was afraid if I asked it would excite him. Dr Morley says particularly he mustn't have any excitement. He says——"

"You haven't any idea what it was about—what Zoller was here for, I mean?"

"That's what I'm saying, Charley. You know he has all poppa's business to attend to. It might be 'most anything. Dr Morley says if poppa is bothered any more about business——"

"Zoller's an old fox. I don't trust him."

Mame came, at this, as near to indignation as her brother had ever kown her to come:

"You mustn't say that, Charley. I'm sure I don't know what poppa would do without him."

"He'd do with me to attend to his business for him, that's what he'd do. Zoller came to him with some story from some of Jim Trent's friends, I guess, and got the old man down on me. He began to change just about the time I began to go to Jim's place."

"Oh, Charley, how can you think of all these things when poppa——"

That softened him.

"I know, Mame," he said, more gently; "we've got to do all we can for poppa now."

She looked up at him beseechingly.

"That's just it; and if he heard of your—about you and Mrs Trent——"

"You mean about *Edith*. For heaven's sake, do stop connecting her with Jim Trent!"

"About you and Edith, I mean, Charley—if father heard about that, it would be a shock, and the doctor said that any shock might kill him immediately."

"H'm," said Charley. He took a short turn of the room. When he spoke again, his back was toward her. "Do you think you can keep to-morrow's papers away from him? I guess the news of this wedding's not important enough to be

Koviloor Acadamy
in more than one issue and they may miss it altogether—that's what we hope for, anyway. I was going to ask you to do this before, only Edith thought otherwise—until she understood how really sick he was, of course."

"Yes, I can keep them from him. Oh!"—Mame brightened—"will you do it, Charley? Your part, I mean. Will you?"

"Yes," he said, turning at last. "I will." Circumstances were working together for him again. "I suppose I can still spend a good deal of my time here for awhile—enough to keep poppa from suspecting anything: the way you put it, it's my plain duty."

She came to him, her myopic eyes still red from tears, but her lips smiling gratitude.

"Oh, thank you, Charley, thank you! You *are* good, and—and, Charley, I will love Edith, and I do hope you'll be very happy!"

"Oh, that's all right. Don't thank me. But I want you to do something for me. Find out if that paper that old Zoller was here about was a new will."

"I'll try."

"And if it is a will, try and find out what's in it, will you?"

She nodded.

"Oh, and just a moment, Mame, can you lend me half-a-century? I'll be a little short till to-morrow, when my allowance is due."

Koviloor Acadamy

SEVENTH CHAPTER

THE days that slowly lengthened themselves into months began not unhappily for Edith Vanaman and her new husband. They had long ago discounted the delicious surprises of a life together led by two persons desperately in love; but, though they had made the mistake of choosing each other for no reason save that of their mutual passion, and Edith's passion for success, their circumstances developed three interests that they could and did share in common; they wanted to be quit of the memory of Jim, they wanted the invention to prosper, and they wanted the elder Vanaman's money.

Edith's surrender to the necessity of concealing their marriage from Charley's father involved, she recognised, a postponement of those plans for a more expensive manner of life upon which she had confidently counted. Despite her vague pre-knowledge of her fiance's temporary dependence on old Vanaman, despite the invention's then slow progress toward the market, she had expected that rather liberal parental assistance would be given her husband by way of a wedding-gift, and looked forward to a consequent advance in the receiver's career. The disappointment was bitter, but she met it resolutely. Her only experience in house-hunting and housekeeping had been with an artist husband, and almost her only knowledge of New York apartments was concerned with studio buildings. Such a building as that in which she had lived with Jim was far too costly for her present condition; but she had heard some of his friends speak of the Washington Square district as cheaper, and there she decided to engage rooms for herself and Charley where they might live economically until riches came with the exploitation of his invention, the opportunity for her to meet and soften the elder Vanaman—or the elder Vanaman's death.

Yet even the Washington Square district proved unexpectedly expensive. A decade ago an "artists'" quarter, it

Koviloor Acadamy
had now become a show-place—and charged show prices. The rents brazenly demanded were out of all honest proportion to the comfort of the dark rooms shown her. She could not pay them if she had wished, and she began by scorning the rooms at any price. She had several discouraging days of interviews with landladies less and less well-dressed, showing rooms more and more beneath her most modest requirements.

In the end, she was compelled to engage—only temporarily, she was sure—what the slovenly proprietor called a "third-floor front and back" in a house of grimy red brick far across Sixth Avenue in Greenwich Village. Trucks, surface-cars, and school-children made the streets noisy from dawn until evening, and at night the trains on the elevated railroad, indistinguishable from the choral cacophony of day, screeched and thundered close to the bedroom windows, with a horrid regularity that first deafened the quivering ear and then left a more painful silence: the waiting for the next assault. The bedroom was narrow and crowded, and it presented all those inducements for quarrelling which are offered by any small space when two people try to dress in it; but Edith's clothes, as a woman's, needed cupboards, whereas Charley's, as a man's, fared as well in one remaining bureau drawer as elsewhere, even if the bureau drawer was that nearest to the carpet, stuck when it was closed, and had to be kicked shut after every time that it was opened. The living-room was in ungracious keeping with the bedroom; but the couple went out to their meals at supportable restaurants.

During the better part of November, husband and wife were prey to a fear that, unpleasant as it was, saved them from boredom; they were afraid that some word of their marriage might get into the newspapers and reach the eye of Charley's father, or that gossip, gathering it downtown, would bear it up. This fear, however, gradually passed. They bought all the papers, but the papers were silent. They were so silent that Edith sometimes felt hurt at the apparent journalistic assumption of her unimportance. It was Jim's work, of course: he would still be hugging that pretence of saving her from publicity.

Then, little by little, the tedium of their situation made itself felt. It settled on their love as Autumn weather settles on the land. It was a mist, a fog, a drizzle; at last it turned to a monotonous, discouraging rain. Charley had carried out his plan of saying to his father that he must sleep

Koviloor Acadamy
downtown so as to be at his office early in the morning: he passed half of his working hours dictating, in that office, letters that praised his receiver and petitioned financiers for engagements; the other half waiting in anterooms, interviewing powerless and pompous subordinates, accepting with a mask of belief the palpable lies of delay. Edith substituted walks in Washington Square for her old rambles in Central Park, dreamed her dreams of success at a window overlooking that Greenwich Village street, waited and grew sick with hope deferred. In the evenings, she and Charley would go now to one shoddy restaurant and now to another, putting off as long as they could the inevitable return to that cramped bedroom: Or they would scurry up to the gallery of a theatre, dodging recognition by possible acquaintances of other days in the better seats. Or they would sit together in their living-room, with the blue gas burning at its highest, after shopping for cold food at delicatessen establishments, while Charley talked of his adventures in China or of the good times soon to be: night-clubs were too expensive, nor would Edith compromise on a cheap dance hall. And all this while old Vanaman seemed to grow no better and no worse.

Gradually, therefore, two of their interests became one. As time dragged on, they realised increasingly that the money required to launch the receiver was not to be had from without, and so increasingly that their hope lay in Charley's dying, but slowly dying, father who would do nothing substantial while he lived. Thus the invention, which had formed the chief topic of their intimate conversations, yielded to long guesses regarding old man Vanaman's inclinations and his will.

"You're sure he hasn't guessed that we're married?" Edith would daily inquire.

And Charley would daily answer:

"I'm sure of it. Haven't I told him I had to live away from home because I had to be near my work?" He would pause before sincerely adding: "And you know that I think it's even a duty to him, because, as Mame says, a shock might kill him any time."

Did Edith want her father-in-law to die? She did not tell her husband that this question so much as suggested itself to her, and she was not then sure of its true answer. She, who feared death above every other terror, she who would not have wished death even for Jim: certainly she did not want

Koviloor Acadamy
Mr Vanaman to die if his will had been changed to Charley's hurt.

From Mame, now shut in the house by her father's illness, Charley could discover nothing.

"You don't half try to find out," he upbraided her.

"I do so try," she protested; "but I can't ask poppa in so many words, can I? You know he mustn't be excited."

"Then why don't you try Zoller? He comes around here every once in a while, you say."

"He does; and he's very nice; but he wouldn't talk to me about such a thing—he'd think he had no right to talk to me about a client's business with him."

"I wish he'd always been as high and mighty about such things! Look here, Mame; here I am keeping my part of your bargain, and you're not keeping yours. You wanted me not to tell poppa about me getting married, and I haven't told him. Why don't you keep your word as well as I keep mine?"

All that Mame could do was to wipe the tears from her myopic eyes and promise to try again. She tried often, but vainly.

There were moments when Charley thought of softening his father's heart toward Edith: all his approaches from this direction were as futile as his sister's from the other. In the room with the ugly mahogany furniture the terrible old man lay, all day and all night long, on the bed, his body imperceptibly weakening, but his eyes keen, his brain clear, his prejudices unshaken.

There came a time when Edith was annoyed by her husband's inability to discover whether a new will had been drawn. On one or two occasions she quarrelled with him because of this failure.

"Why don't you ask him?" she demanded.

"That'd only put the idea in his head," Charley gloomily assured her.

"Then can't you get Mame to find out?"

"I've tried it. I've told you I've tried. He just won't say."

"And you can't get him to advance anything?"

"Not beyond my regular allowance. He says he doesn't know enough about radio. He says if I can interest some company or some expert, he'll come across."

"I don't see why you can't interest an expert," Edith would reply.

But despite business rebuffs Charley continued sanguine of

Koviloor Acadamy
the merits of his invention and proud of his abilities to convince anybody of anything. He would try to explain the intricacies of the radio market situation that, for the moment only, delayed success. Edith listened but little and based her argument upon the question of sheer merit; she either could not or would not understand. It was a period of suspense, and they agreed at least upon one thing concerning it: they silently agreed that it furnished excuse for seeking relief in a postponement of the time when Charley should give up liquor.

"If only I could see your father, I know I could bring him 'round," said Edith.

"No," Charley declared. "I've done *my* best, and he simply won't have it. If I tried any harder, he'd begin to suspect, and that would be the end of us forever."

The suspense was pulled to a straining tension. Edith dreaded the arrival of a child, which, in their present circumstances, would never do; she came to dislike the sight of babies in their coaches in Washington Square, but thanks to Diana Wentworth, she managed to escape maternity and to evade Charley's patriarchal tendencies. For the rest, Edith bit her lip and waited; Charley, in his little downtown office, went on dictating verbose letters to capitalists and notes to experts, inviting them to call and test his instrument. The tasks of both were hard; the latter's appeared so fruitless that it began to wear on even the husband's hopes, and its failures more than once sharpened Edith's tongue to bitter criticism.

"We might save a little money," she said, "if you weren't spending so much on making your office look as if you were carrying on a big business."

"We might save some," he answered, "but we'd never make any. The only way to begin to make money is to pretend to have it."

She disagreed. Why couldn't he at least dispense with his stenographer?

"What? Fire Miss Girodet? She's my best asset. These big financiers won't read a hand-written letter, or a badly typed one, for that matter."

"But couldn't you rent desk-room in some other man's office and share his stenographer's time with him?"

"No, I couldn't. You don't understand these things, Edith. I tell you a fellow has to put up the bluff of success if he wants to succeed."

He urged her to come to see his office, but she refused to

Kovilloor Academy
go. She had never been there. While she was Jim's wife to go would have been indiscreet; now she had so many worries at home that she was afraid to make an expedition which, discovering tokens of failure, might add to her burden a new care.

Since Charley could not economise at his office, Edith attempted further domestic retrenchments. As she had nothing to do all day long, she bought a gas stove, had it installed, after an argument with the landlady, and prepared her own meals and Charley's. She repaired their clothes and secured a slight, though inadequate, reduction in their rent by undertaking all the work of their two rooms. But these tasks were distasteful to her, and she hurried through them to gain a time that, gained, hung heavily. Instinctively, she was avoiding such of her former acquaintances as she chanced to encounter in the shops or on the streets, for she was ashamed of her poverty and she suspected that the mere mention of Charley's name in Jim's dropped cross-suit had by this time somehow become known to them and was held against her. One afternoon she went a block out of her way to avoid approaching that prim Mrs Entwhistle who used to live across the hall from the apartments in which Edith and Jim lived. She scorned herself for these qualms; she used all her logic to banish them: but they remained. On a single occasion she mentioned them to Charley.

"Well," he said—he had had a particularly discouraging day and was very tired—"it's not my fault, is it? At the start of the whole thing, I told you Jim might make trouble, but you were sure he never would."

After that she abandoned the practice of bearing these tales to him and resolved to wait until the triumph of the invention placed her, where she now was not, in a position to make new friends as desirable as the old had been. She even did not tell him when she heard one of her neighbours in the house refer to her as "that divorced woman," and she began to pass her spare time in wandering upon shopping excursions during which she did not shop because she had not money and from which she returned miserable with the pangs of unsatisfied envy.

Charley's lot continued to be little better. He felt, as keenly as did his wife, his unrewarded business endeavours and he kept to his own heart several affronts that decreased the frequency of his visits to his club. He was sustained solely by his confidence in the ultimate triumph of his invention.

"Let 'em wait," he would say to himself. "They'll come

Koviloor Acadamy
crawling to me on their knees when I'm rich, and then it'll be me that throws *them* down. Money is what talks in this burg: money and nothing else."

Edith noticed that the club of which he had been so inordinately vain was playing less and less part in his conversation and life. She had thought it unfair that he should have this social outlet while she had none, and her only reason for tolerating it was Charley's proud announcement, at the start of the divorce proceedings, that Jim had resigned his membership. This was a social triumph over Jim; besides, although Jim would say that he resigned because he did not want to embarrass Charley, it would look as if the first husband's withdrawal were prompted by a guilty conscience that could not front Edith's champion. Now the full effect of appearances had been gained.

"Why don't you give up the club?" she asked. "It would save a good deal, wouldn't it?"

"What?"—Charley could not credit her.

"Well, you hardly ever go there any more."

"I wouldn't give it up if I never went to it. Everybody'd say I was down and out. You've got to have a club, even if you don't use it for anything but to take your business friends there."

"Jim resigned."

Charley flamed into a rage.

"Jim, Jim, Jim! Can't you ever get him out of your mind? Not for a minute? I tell you, I won't have you talk about him! Of course he resigned. He's on the toboggan. I won't have the fellows say the same thing about me. No, I'm not going to resign, and that's all there is to it."

Generally, she ruled Charley; but when he broke into these rages, he ruled her. Edith dropped the subject of the club, and it was not mentioned between them until some weeks later, when Charley told her that Jim had been elected to one that she knew was better.

They continued to wait. They saved money by giving up the theatre. They were thrown entirely upon each other's company. Their love-making continued, but no man and woman that ever lived can pass every evening in love-making, and so Edith's talk and Charley's steadily strengthened its emphasis upon the financial possibilities of their future. Their relief was alcoholic; yet the bootleg stuff became increasingly necessary, increasingly worse and increasingly expensive.

Koviloor Acadamy

At last two things happened together: Charley's father, growing steadily weaker, became peevish because Charley did not pass more time under the paternal roof; and Charley, nervously alert to trouble through the worry that breeds worry, noted more and more, and more and more resented in his wife's talk, certain words and twists of phrase that were undoubtedly unconscious reminiscences of Jim. Weariness and policy combined to move the husband: he passed two or three nights of each week in his father's house, and for these nights at least left Edith alone.

That was all. Everything else went on as it had gone on previously. The invention did not prosper; old Vanaman remained stingy and prejudiced—and alive. Edith wanted Charley to turn his allowance over to her uncensored administration, as Jim had been in the habit of turning over his earnings; but the mention of that desire brought on one of Charley's rages, in the course of which he told her that she was evidently trying to play upon him the tricks that she had played upon his predecessor. They could not save a cent; the day came when they were in debt.

She kept it from him as long as she dared, but she told him at last, and his reply was that he could not concern himself with her affairs. The management of their domestic matters was her business; if she failed in that, how had she the hardihood to ask for the administration of his whole allowance? He had worries enough of his own.

There was something in his tone that gave her a new fear.

"Charley," she asked, "are you in trouble, too?"

They were sitting in the front room of their suite. It was evening. The gas, burning full head, showed cruelly all the cheapness of their surroundings. Outside, the light from the street lamps cast a haze over a wet December street. Every little while a screaming train on the elevated-road made it necessary for husband and wife to shriek at each other.

"Trouble?" said Charley. "What else have I had for months?"

"But I mean—I mean debt."

He had been avoiding her eyes. Now he looked at her:

"Well, aren't *you* in debt too?"

It was a fact, then! For the thousandth time they returned to their weary struggle in the financial net. In the midst of it, Charley poured himself a drink.

Koviloor Academy
"I thought," said Edith, "that you were going to quit that?"

"It's taken you a long time to remember," he chuckled, grimly; "and I don't see *you* stopping."

"It doesn't hurt me.'

"And I couldn't get through the strain without it. When everything's all right again, I'll quit; but nobody could expect a man to quit when he's going through what I've got to go through with."

The details of his trouble came out at last. He had fallen behind in his office rent, and his restaurant checks at the club were overdue. Both debts could be juggled for a time, but not for long.

Edith had not the heart again to urge him to lessen his business expenses and resign from the club. She could only look at him with knitted fingers and wide eyes:

"What are we to do? What are we to *do?*"

"I don't know," he answered.

His haggard eyes met hers again. Then, suddenly, both looked away. They looked out of the window at the hazy lights and the wet street, at the shining tops of umbrellas and the hunched backs of shambling men that walked unprotected in the rain.

Edith's voice was low. It was toneless.

"Were you up home to-day?"

He did not turn his head.

"Yes," he said.

"How were—things?"

"He seems just about the same."

Then both went on looking out of the window.

§ 2. One thing seemed possible: if there were no combating exterior forces, Edith could at least conquer the morbid fears that, she believed, sprang from within. The next afternoon she went to call on Mrs Dunbar.

She was close to the Dunbar house when she saw a motor draw up at the steps. She saw the former Jean Dent get out and go into the house.

Edith's hesitation was momentary and concerned itself not with her past fears, but her present policy. Her cards read:

MRS CHARLES VANAMAN

But Jean had never met Charley, and Edith remembered that

Koviloor Acadamy
the news of the second marriage had not been in the papers. Once she had been glad of this; at another time she feared that the news would get to Mrs Dunbar through gossip, even though they had no real friends in common, and get there in a fashion unfavourable to the match. If it had not got there at all, how was Jean Dunbar to recognise this new name? Edith took a pencil from her purse and, under "Mrs Charles Vanaman," scribbled the words "Edith Trent."

She rang the bell and sent up her card by the neat servant who, as a symbol of peace and prosperity, spurred the visitor's longings. To think that she had to use Jim's name in order to enter here! Edith flushed: she would have been just as intelligible to Jean if she had written "Edith Moxton."

The reception room into which she had been shown was rich, but quiet. It should have been soothing. Edith, tapping a restless foot in a thick rug, heard the servant descending the stairs:

"Mrs Dunbar is not at home," said the servant. . . .

§ 3. Well, let them cut her, let them send down their lying "not at homes!" Edith would not surrender; she would wait. She would wait for her revenge. That would come when the receiver made her rich; and when the receiver made her rich, Edith would be the one that held the knife.

Meanwhile, there was Diana. For many weeks, Edith had neglected Diana. She would look her up now. She would look up Diana Wentworth and she would make new friends, too. If these had to be in a lower scale than Mrs Dunbar, than all the hopes that Edith had fed for her life with Charley, they would at least serve to lessen the present tedium, and Jean had taught her the way to get rid of undesirable acquaintances when prosperity should change her visiting list.

She put her resolution into harness. Library hours were over: she called at Diana's picturesque flat in a "model tenement," and Diana, who was no woman to bear grudges, received her enthusiastically.

"You're looking thin and—— Oh, how brave you are!" said Diana. "It's splendid to see a woman enduring so much for Principle."

Edith shrank from that unfinished sentence, but she was glad to find a welcome and said so. Diana talked to her of Archibald Hodge and Sylvia Tytus and Womanism.

"You must come around to the New Radical Club," she

Koviloor Acadamy
said, " I'll take you some evening. It is such a Melting-Pot for ideas. You get an idea and develop it and get Everything out of it that it holds for your own type. Then you go to the New Radical Club, you know, and pass it on to some other type who can get Everything out of it that there is in it for him, and he gives you an idea that he's got Everything out of that there was in it for him, and you get Everything out of *that* that there is in it for you. And so you go on, and on, and on," Diana nodded her handsome head. " That's Growth," she concluded.

Edith thought she would like to grow—until the invention was making money. She did not at once accept Diana's invitation to the New Radical Club, because she was not yet ready to meet crowds; but she did let Diana introduce her to several people, and among these she took especially to a few whose radicalism limited itself to art. They had done nothing as yet, but they were surely going to do everything; they were not at all in Jim's set, so they presented no dangers or embarrassments, and Edith's life with Jim had made her a little less ignorant of art than of sociology.

Charley had been cultivating the silence of desperation. In his bearing toward Edith, he was as affectionate as he had ever been; except when he dominated her by one of his sudden rages, he feared her, but he found her no longer a mystery. The memory of Jim was grown to an obsession; he hated Jim as we can hate only those we have wronged, and when even Charley had to admit that a resignation from his club was imperative, he wrote his note of withdrawal from this pride of his life with the certainty that Jim was somehow to blame for it. Business stood still; creditors threatened. Charley had got into the way of leaving his office several times daily to go to the nearest speakeasy for a drink. " I'm going out for a moment," he would say toMiss Girodet, his stenographer; " if anybody calls, tell 'em I'll be right back "—and he would return smelling heavily of bad liquor and annoyed because nobody had called. He was putting on fat. His abdomen bulged, and his neck overlapped his collar; his cheeks, on which tiny purple veins became visible, were pendulous.

At Christmas time Edith hoped that father Vanaman might present his son with a liberal gift; but Charley's parent gave Charley what he had given him at every Christmas for fifteen years : an umbrella. She herself, somewhat in advance of the season, sought to renew touch with her own relatives, whom

Koviloor Acadamy
she had theretofore avoided as much as possible; but she was not much more successful than her husband: Uncle Morty maintained a diplomatic silence. Uncle Gregory, the rich widower, sent her a five-dollar bill and said that he did not approve of divorce; Douglas wrote that his wife spent all the money he could make; Fred was lost somewhere with the waiter's daughter; Aunt Polly expressed a box containing a dozen rolls of ribbon from her latest shop and a lace handkerchief from Aunt Caroline; Aunt Hattie's gift was a year's subscription to "The Churchman," and the Rev. Stephen, to whom Edith had timidly hinted that she might visit him for a little rest, sent her ten dollars and told her that, much as he regretted it, the presence of a divorced sister at the rectory might make talk among his parishioners.

It was about this time that, on a Sunday, she and Charley happened to pass a little hall in an obscure street where her radical artists were holding an exhibition. She had tried to induce her husband to meet some of these friends, for she knew that it would help to take his mind from business worries; but Charley refused because he thought that all painters were what Jim had been.

"Let's go in here," she suggested.

"I don't want to go in," said Charley.

"It's free," she urged.

"I don't care. I haven't got any use for artists. One artist is all I need for a lifetime, thank you."

"But these artists aren't like Jim. They laugh at his kind of work. Their idea"—she recalled one of Diana's explanations—"is either to get back to the earliest methods or forward to the farthest future's: they're real revolutionists, you see."

Charley was not interested in any theory of art, but the fact that these revolutionaries were opposed to Jim appealed to him. He consented to go into the narrow room, and he went ready to espouse the cause of the exhibitors for the best of reasons: it was a cause opposed to Jim's.

It was an endeavour, so the brief catalogue said, "to carry back into the Holy Land of Art the Ark of the Covenant of Beauty which has been banished from those sacred fields by the Philistine brushes of men who had not eye for it." The result proved to be a collection such as Charley had never guessed could exist outside those back advertising pages of smart magazines which he never regarded, and at first he

Koviloor Acadamy
knew its exhibits to be pictures solely because frames contained them. The lot nearest the door were geometrical designs labelled "Nude"; multicoloured lightning flashes entitled now "Labour" and again "The Earth-Soul"; something distantly suggestive of an exploding rocket, but called "Desire." Then followed examples of a certain draftsmanship, yet a draftsmanship that he would have attributed only to children: all the women it depicted were either tubercular, he thought, or dropsical—all its men suffering from some physical deformity or other.

He didn't care much for pictures, anyhow; but he knew what he liked. He liked pink Egyptian queens in royal galleys rowed by unsweating slaves; nymphs posed, on a sunlit afternoon, in the shade of trees of which miraculously no leaf cast any shadow on the models' creamy skin: naked Roman ladies —you knew they were Egyptian and nymphs and Roman because the lettering on the label told you so—going to the bath. He liked, without knowing their names, Bouguereau, Alma Tadema, Frederic Leighton and the pupils of the Düsseldorf school. He could stand a Napoleon at Waterloo —on a curveting horse and in stainless clothes. But what he most liked were pictures that told a story.

In his old Lexington Avenue bedroom, brought thither from his boyhood bedroom "back home," was a steel engraving. It showed a little girl who had evidently just entered a doctor's office. Tears in her eyes, she was holding up for the physician's inspection a doll with a broken arm. Underneath the engraving was printed:

"Won't you please cure my dollie?"

"And even that print doesn't really have to be there," Charley used to say.

He thought of the picture now:

"It's something you *understand*," he thought. "Why, you can tell smack off what it's all about."

It was as different in one way from anything Jim did as all these things were in another. There seemed to be a great many "ways" in Art. Charley felt a bit confused.

But he felt a bit better very presently. A group of the exhibitors, as their talk revealed them to be, were admiring one another's exhibits. They had knitted brows and compressed lips, and he heard one of them say:

"This is the sort of work that gives a living confutation to the kind of tripe done by demoded men like Jim Trent."

Koviloor Acadamy

That was the beginning of Charley's introduction to the masterpieces of the revolutionary artists. After it, Edith had no difficulty in taking him about to meet the painters. During some time, she and her husband were a part of those painters' studio-life.

§ 4. For a Saturday afternoon early in January, they received invitations to a tea that was to be given by one of these artists: a Gladys Smyser. It was written in white ink on turkey-red paper and concluded with the words:

"From the poems of Beryl Abrams, recitations by Mr Ming."

"Shall we go?" asked Edith.

And Charley surprised her by answering:

"Of course we'll go. This is the sort of artists I'm for."

Miss Smyser's studio was at the rear of the top floor in "The Beatrice," an apartment-house for unmarried literary and artistic women. One gained access by a slow elevator that climbed only two-thirds of the way and then—probably because it grew too tired—stopped short; by a long walk down a dark passage, and by a final ascent up two flights of noisy iron stairs. Neither Edith nor Charley had been here before, and they were a little startled by what they found.

The hall-door of Miss Smyser's apartment struck a chime of bells as it was opened. The hall itself was in pitch darkness. Charley stumbled on the discarded overcoat of one guest and put his foot through the derby hat of another, as Edith and he were led forward to the scarcely brighter studio beyond.

Here heavy curtains of crimson plush had been drawn across the windows, and about the picture-covered walls tiny candles, hanging in swinging sconces, supplied but the faintest illumination. The atmosphere was thick with the brown spirals of smoke from Japanese incense, and the blue spirals from many cigarettes, and through this Charley could discern dim persons moving gently among Oriental tables, inlaid with ivory, or seated in artistically cramped positions on low divans. In one corner, before a bronze Mott Street Buddha, a tall, dark young man served tea, and a short, blonde young woman mixed sweet cocktails in each of which a white violet floated. Everybody was smoking, and, though everybody talked at once, all conversation was in whispers: a generally fond air pervaded the room.

Koviloor Acadamy

Miss Smyser—Charley could make out only that she had a skinny arm and was dressed in what looked like a crimson kimono figured with yellow diamonds and spades—pressed their hands and peered at them through the pervading smoke of the incense.

"How d'y' do?" she said in a hissing tone. "Can't see who you are, but I'm awfully glad to see you. Isn't this splendid? And we've got Oswald Beckstein here. Will you have tea and brandy or only a cocktail? It's real cognac; Morrie Rosenberg ran it through from Quebec in his own car last week."

They took cocktails—Charley took two cocktails and choked on the violet in the first one, much to the delight of the dwarfed blonde—and then Miss Smyser, who did not know their names until she was half-way around the room with her introductions, presented them to the other guests.

Of these there were a great many: far more than it would have seemed possible the room could hold. There was a beefy woman with a corsage in imminent danger of explosion, who was already tipsy and whose mission in life, Miss Smyser said, was to bring the truths of occultism within reach of the masses: she was the reincarnation of Jeanne d'Arc, who, in her turn, had been, it appeared, the reincarnation of Sappho. There was a man so fat that, having seated himself at this lady's feet, he was unable to rise, and he was a composer of music—chiefly love-songs and serenades. There was a negro doctor that wrote novels, and a negress novelist that practised psychoanalysis. There was a handsome, sharp-eyed man who announced himself as the sole surviving Calvinist and made epigrams that were well worth while, but that nobody listened to, and a sculptor that repeated as his own dead men's epigrams that everybody applauded. There was one woman of wealth, position, and intellect, who was politely bored, and several rich women without those other two attributes, who were fascinated. These proved patently lenders, and about them hung a number of greedy-eyed youths and other borrowers. Two boys held hands beside a picture of themselves, having eyes for only the picture and each other. Through the crowd moved a chain of six girl-painters following a pimpled poetess, and a little chorus of old maiden ladies in youthful costumes stood surrounding a lad with neutral-coloured hair who sat cross-legged on a divan and appeared to talk in his sleep.

Koviloor Acadamy
"Who's that?" asked Charley.

Miss Smyser had stopped and was standing uncertainly outside the circle of the maiden-ladies' chorus. She gave Charley a look that said: "Are you joking with this sacred matter, or is it possible that you really don't know?" What her lips whispered was:

"Oswald Beckstein."

Edith saw that Charley was about to commit the solecism of putting the fatal question: "Who's Oswald Beckstein?" Indeed, her husband's lips were opening to utter it, when she interposed:

"We so admired his picture 'Modern Godiva' at the exhibition, Miss Smyser—didn't we, Charley?"

She had checked Charley, who changed his question to an "Ugh-hugh" of assent, but she had not much improved affairs with her hostess. Her hostess said:

"Naturally."

It was plain that everybody must admire Mr Beckstein's work.

"Like to present you," Miss Smyser pursued, "but you can see he's talking Art—you can always tell that by the way he closes his eyes; Oswald Beckstein won't tolerate the breaking of his thread of thought when he's talking Art.—Oh, there are some more people coming in! Wonder who *they* are. Excuse me."

She went to the newcomers, leaving Edith and Charley in the rear of Mr Beckstein's chorus.

"I remember that picture," said Charley: "the thin, naked girl whose hair wasn't bobbed, eh?"

Edith feared he was speaking too loudly. In the hope that he might imitate her discretion, she made a nod serve for reply.

"Well," said Charley, "they were all good pictures there, but that girl was the only one that looked like she wouldn't crack if you squeezed her."

"Hush!" whispered Edith. "Somebody—he might hear you."

"What if he does?" inquired her husband, but he did lower his voice. "He don't look as if he'd mind a little praising."

Mr Bechstein certainly did not seem to hate himself. He sat with his pearl-grey trousers drawn up to show pearl-grey socks embroidered with purple pansies. He still appeared to

Koviloor Acadamy
be asleep, but he was smiling in his sleep, and his smile was divinely complacent.

"What else do you know about him?" asked Charley, when Edith remained silent to his preceding query.

"Nothing," said Edith at his ear. "I just happened to remember that one picture."

In fact, it was the only picture that Mr Beckstein had ever done or ever would do, for, shortly after this tea at "The Beatrice," he married the richest of his maiden-lady chorus, who was also the oldest and most angular, and she was so jealous that she would not let him paint from a model unless she herself brought her embroidery into the studio. Beckstein said it robbed him of his inspiration. Edith never saw him on a second occasion, nor did Charley, but on this occasion Charley remained for some time fascinated.

They stood there watching. Every little while Mr Beckstein opened his eyes ever so little and said something about Art in a loud voice, apparently addressing empty space; but Edith noted that the slightest inattention on the part of anybody else in the room—the chorus was never anything but rapturously attentive—brought faint shadows of annoyance to the artist's face.

"He looks kind of greenish," said Charley. "Isn't he well?"

"Hush!" Edith again commanded. "He'll be sure to hear you."

"But isn't he well?" Charley persisted. "I thought maybe he was consumptive or something."

"Of course he's well," said Edith: "only he's a genius; that's all. Come on away."

She plucked at her husband's sleeve. Charley, who felt the effects of the close air and the two cocktails, was rooted to his point of vantage.

"I don't *believe* that's all," said Charley: "just look at the man's eyes."

The man's eyes were at that moment open. The irises were so pale as to be indistinguishable from the yellow surfaces in which they were set. Mr Beckstein looked still asleep, though dreaming. He was speaking, with a bony gesture of his left hand, about Art.

The maiden ladies applauded by a great intake of the choral breath.

Charley chuckled. Edith was relieved when one of the chain of six artist-girls accosted him.

Koviloor Acadamy

"I saw you at our Exhibition the other Sunday, Mr Vanaman," she said.

She looked exactly like Miss Symser. So did all her companions. The marks of identification consisted of different coloured kimonos.

"Yes," said Charley, "I was there. Great show."

"Did you see my little trifle," asked the artist-girl.

Charley was on the verge of displaying the truth when Edith once more saved him.

"It was charming," said she.

"Oh, not that," the girl deprecated. "Still, I do think the values were well handled."

This time Charley was too quick for his wife.

"I'm glad you made a good bargain," he said. "The only artist I ever knew was a fool in money matters."

Edith had nudged him, but she was tardy. Leaving the girl between a smile and a frown, the wife dragged her husband toward the pimpled poetess.

"Why'n't you let me talk to her?" grumbled Charley.

Edith was saved for the time from answering by Miss Smyser clapping her hands for silence. Mr Beckstein appeared mildly hurt; his chorus was horrified, for he was gasping his way toward another aphorism; but the rest of the company submitted.

"I am sorry to say," announced Miss Smyser, managing, for this formal statement, to drop her usual telegraphic mode of speech—"I am sorry to say that Beryl Abrams can't be here to-day to hear her own poems recited, because she has a cold in her head."

There was a murmur of condolence followed by a loud sniff from the pimpled poetess.

"Nevertheless," continued Miss Smyser, "we are to have the best of Beryl here, for she says that she puts what is best of her into her poems, and Laurence Ming is going to recite some of Beryl's as yet unpublished 'Love Songs from a Cannibal Jungle.'"

The audience fluttered its approbation. Charley clapped his hands once loudly, and then, finding that he was alone in this demonstration, scowled at everybody else.

Mr Laurence Ming came to the centre of the room. He was a diminutive man built like a jack-in-the-box, hinged like that delight of innocent childhood, and full, like it, of startlingly sudden gestures. He had long black hair and the

Koviloor Acadamy
eyes of a sparrow. His face and hands were the colour of mixed mustard—German mustard—and on his right wrist he wore a silver bracelet.

"I ought to explain," he said in a high, perky voice, "that these jungle poems of Beryl's are authentic. Perfectly authentic. The jungle poems are literal translations."—He beamed on the two dusky literati, who deigned to smile in return.—"Not Harlem: from the Central African dialects."

Again that flutter of approbation—again frowned into silence by Charley. The audience drew itself back into attitudes of literary attention. The air became hushed. In the same high voice, and with the same jerky intonation in which he had first spoken, Mr Ming, punctuating his recital by gestures that made Charley fear the little man's arms would fly away, began:

"My woman,
My lioness,
My she-elephant!
Your face is like the moon,
It is like the full moon, like the moon at the full;
Daily you drink five cups of melted fat.
Where you walk, there your tracks are like the tracks of the hippopotamus when he passes through the mud of the river-shore.
Fear you that I shall bewitch you?
I will bewitch you!
I will crush you in my arms;
I will strangle you;
I will tear your wide cheeks with my strong teeth,
Large daughter of great chieftains,
My woman,
My lioness,
My she-elephant! That's all!"

The concluding phrase was Mr Ming's intimation that the poem had indeed come to an end, but he uttered it as if it were part of the last line of the poem. He snapped his flying arms back to his side and snapped his head as if it were the lash of a whip.

The audience breathed deeply by way of applause. The dark doctor that wrote novels said something, in a stage-whisper, about the beauty of the primitive passions. Some-

Koviloor Acadamy
body else confided to the company that Beryl never *could* fall in love with a thin girl,

"Art," said Mr Oswald Beckstein, "is eternal."

His attending maiden ladies chorused: "Yes."

The chain of artist-girls and a lad or two interrupted with jazzing accounts of their latest visit to the Harlem dance halls —of the new negrophilism in general, Charley unheeding. Mr Ming was encored half a dozen times, and Charley took a cocktail after each. He had to: he had, just now, noted that the negroes were negroes—he resented their presence and yet did not want to make a scene.

Then the pimpled poetess whispered indignantly to Miss Smyser, and Miss Smyser called for volunteers to recite some of the pimpled poetess's poems. The response was uncertain, so the author herself took the floor.

"I want to take the universe in my arms——" she began.

"She weighs about sixty pounds," commented Charley. Those cocktails were working hard.

But the poetess went on:

> "I want to take the universe in my arms
> Without alarms,
> And face to face,
> In cosmic love-embrace,
> Love it for one long siderial day;
> It satiate,
> My mighty mate,
> Then slay
> And fling away!"

"Yes, sir," said Charley: "she don't weigh a pound above sixty-two and a half, and she'd run from a rabbit."

He irritated Edith.

"Stop!" she whispered; "after the break you made about that girl's picture, I should think you'd have done enough."

"What break?" asked Charley, belligerently. "The girl said she'd got a good value for her picture, and I said I was glad she made a little something."

"Yes," said Edith, "that's exactly what you did say. I suppose you didn't know that 'values' is an art-term and hasn't anything to do with sales."

Charley reddened.

"I forgot you'd been an artist's wife," he said.

Koviloor Acadamy
The smoke of the cigarettes had banished the odour of the incense. Through the blue cloud, as Edith and Charley relapsed into a sullen quiet, they heard the corpulent composer talking to the fat occultist.

"Of *course* James Trent can't paint: I don't have to know him to know that," he was saying; "but now the whole of Society'll be running after him. That portrait of Bishop Peel has set him up for life."

Edith and Charley had forgotten their quarrel. They were listening.

"I know," the reincaration replied; "that's the way it goes. Success always comes with a rush. They say he has more orders than he can fill in a year."

"And that's not all," said the first gossip: "he's selling all his old stuff as fast as he can send it to the dealers. . . ."

§ 5. Edith and Charley passed from the heavy twilight of "The Beatrice" to the cold twilight of the street. For some time neither spoke.

"Well," said Edith at last, "what do you think of *that*?"

Charley grunted.

"A divorced man," said Edith, "and he paints a portrait of a Bishop that's down on divorce! Don't they know about him? Don't they *know*? I suppose, next, he'll be wanting to sell that picture he painted of me. He'll never sell that, anyway: *it's* no good. Such luck as he has! He'd say it was the result of hard work. If it is, it's the result of hard work I had to put up with in him when he had no time for his own wife."

They were across the Square now. Edith paused from her monologue through sheer want of breath; but Charley said nothing: his anger was beyond words.

"Well," said Edith, "Jim'd better make hay while the sun shines. He can't fool people long. This is his one chance. It won't go on but a month or two. You'll see——"

"Go on up; I'll be back in a minute," said Charley, when he had brought her across Sixth Avenue to the door of their lodging-house. "Just excuse me."

On the other side of the street, behind a barber-shop, there hid a speak-easy at which he was not unknown.

Koviloor Acadamy

EIGHTH CHAPTER

EDITH soon found that it is easier to recover from one's own reverses than from the successes of those whom one dislikes. A readjustment there finally was, of course: the presence in the house of an unpaid landlady cannot forever be denied by the most preoccupied consciousness; and no matter what one learns of an absent foe, his continued absence does gradually lessen the poignancy of good news about him, until more good news is reported; but, for a brief period, the word of an enemy's well-being is often so shocking that it numbs one against the pangs of the illness from which one suffers. Within a few days Edith was giving little thought to her burden of debt and poverty, whereas weeks were to pass before the pain of what she had overhead at Miss Smyser's tea appreciably lessened.

January closed with one stroke of good luck: Charley managed to borrow from Mame, who had lately been putting three-quarters of her allowance into bank, enough to pay the rent for his office and the two rooms in Greenwich Village; but his relief was transitory, and reliable hope of permanent safety remained as distant as it had been in mid-winter. He had relatively heavy expenditures, and his sole income was the weekly cheque that his father signed for him. Capital went on nibbling at the bait of his invention—and swimming away. Sometimes the fisherman sat on the sun-baked bank for days together with no encouragement; sometimes he fell asleep and woke to wonder if he had missed a catch; sometimes there was a tug at his line which pulled its cork beneath the muddy surface of the water and roused palpitant enthusiasms that the more skilful manipulations of his rod failed to justify; twice at least, during February and March, he had on his hook a fish that fought itself free before he could draw it ashore: he caught nothing. He missed the outlet that his club had given him; neither he nor Edith wished again to mix with artists, because they wanted to hear no more of Jim; he grew deeper and deeper into the habit of secret

Koviloor Academy
drinking to supplement the drinking that Edith, in grudging silence, still permitted him, more and more into the custom of excusing himself from the pressure of someone whose talk made him nervous and of slipping out for a drink before renewing the task of such a conversation; he brooded dumbly, as did Edith too, more and more upon the snail's pace of the elder Vanaman's disease.

Their love did not lessen, but their quarrels increased in both frequency and violence. More than once Edith yawned when Charley was telling her one of his Asiatic adventures, and more than once she interrupted him by saying:

"Yes, I know: you've told me that before."

At the height of a dispute that began in nothing and was not ended for hours, the thought came to him, and he nearly uttered it:

"What I've got is something that Jim cast off."

Charley was not looking well. He was steadily fattening, the veins in his pendulous cheeks assumed an intenser colour, the whites of his eyes were greyish.

§ 2. When April's serenity stole again into the air, it modified, for a time, the mood of both:

For a while, it said to Edith that she was still young and had a chance. And, for a while she believed it.

It said, for a while, to Charley, that he was still alert and resourceful. And Charley, for a while, listened.

Long now, they had been leading an almost cloistered life. Some way or other, those studio-intimacies had become mere acquaintanceships: she found the women hard to talk to: he, approving the men's art for Jim's sake, disapproved of their morals. Theatre visits dwindled; the best dancing places were too dear—the remainder, in one sense, too cheap. On the few occasions when Mr and Mrs Vanaman dined dissolutely, they chose a so-called Italian table d'hôte restaurant where—amid a crowd driven by desperate boredom from surrounding boarding-houses—they ate food so highly seasoned as to deride detection, through a blaze of music that every patron preferred to his own thoughts and the chatter of his companion.

But with April came a momentary change and a moment's money. Charley received a small fee for expert advice to a struggling radio concern.

"Let's do a night club," said Edith.

Koviloor Acadamy

And they did one.

Lights flared; corks popped. A billowy "hostess" vouchsafed them a welcome familiar and loud:

"See who's here, f'r inst'! Welcome, fair strangers. . . . Folks and friends, give the fair strangers a hand!"

Edith liked it and said so. Charley liked it, but said:

"The more apple sauce she slaps on, the bigger the bill."

They had whiskey-and-soda. The music was lively.

"Let's dance."

"Wait a minute."

One tune proved especially popular. People that were eating stopped eating to whistle it; people with their mouths full, hummed. When the orchestra ceased, an encore was vociferously demanded. At a table near the Vanamans' sat a man in his sixties, a serviette tucked under his chin, supping with a girl of sixteen or seventeen: his approval was among the loudest.

Charley approved that tune. He whistled it, too.

"That's a good one. What's its name?"

It had often risen through the floor of their lodgings, issuing from a neighbour's gramophone. Charley would then, however, be lost in the evening newspapers' financial columns, and, although Edith had heard it, she didn't know its title.

"It's 'Old Man River'!" the man in his sixties called across to them.

Whereas only a few couples had been dancing, nearly everybody was by this afoot, some surging to the cleared space intended for that amusement, some adroitly utilizing such space as lay between the tables. The mouths of many still worked on food. The man in his sixties pivoted, dipped and twirled with his young companion; he had forgotten to haul down his serviette, which flapped in his partner's face, and she did not remark it.

"Let's *dance!*"

"Wait a *minute!*" Charley wanted more to drink first.

The few persons that had remained seated were beating accompaniment to the melody, with their knives or forks, on their wine-glasses, their feet stamping in unison. Here and there, somebody would shout a few words of the song.

Charley looked stealthily at Edith and saw that, eyes bright and parted lips, she saw only the dancers. Having drained his glass, he thereupon surreptitiously drained hers.

"Now, then."

Koviloor Acadamy

Unfortunately, not even in childhood had either of them been an easy dancer; of early instruction there was little. Moreover, what was fifteen years since called "the new dancing" never became just "dancing" to them. Here, as in so many matters, though they were not old enough in body to be numbered with the descending generation, they were not young enough at heart for inclusion among the upcoming; desire outstripped ability. Presently Edith knew their failure, and blamed Charley; he feared they were laughed at, and blamed her.

He didn't like it when one of the club's maidenly professionals "cut in"—liked it less when Edith appeared to get along very well with the fellow. Charley stalked back to his table, belligerently ordered another drink and wondered why none of the really female professionals accosted him. He told himself he was afraid the joint'd be raided: the police had been raiding some of these rotten clubs lately, their whispered "protection" to the contrary notwithstanding. To be caught in a raid wouldn't do him any good in his business, if it got out; if it got to his father, it would do him considerable harm.

Charley was lonely. Therefore, he greeted the entrance of thin, nearsighted Gladys Smyser not so much with surprise at this emancipated artist's coming here by herself as with enthusiasm that she should come here at all.

"Oh," she explained as she sat down and popped a cigarette into her mouth, "I only staggered in for a drink to last me till I get to Harlem. Buy me one."

He did.

"Dance?"

He was afraid she might say she would.

She said she wouldn't:

"Not here. Nobody does any more. The kick's all in Harlem. Won't you come along?" Then, as sheer afterthought, she added: "Wife with you?"

He didn't guess the new attractions of Harlem, but he'd just then have gone far in order to break that professional "entertainer's" clutch on Edith:

"We'll be glad to.... Yes, she's here."

Gladys hadn't noticed any falling-off in the relations of these Vanamans with her. She certainly bore no malice against Charley for his ineptitudes at her tea. That he'd attended it indicated, she thought, a willingness to learn.

"The hicks," she murmured, for she could talk rather like

Koviloor Acadamy
a human New Yorker when she didn't talk Art, "all go to Greenwich Village to see the intellectually elect; but the intellectually elect all go to Harlem to duck the hicks and dance with the dingies."

She peered at him.

He wasn't heeding. He was signalling violently to Edith. . . .

§ 3. They'd had a few more whiskeys-and-sodas, over which Gladys was no further explanatory, and, since the theatres had just closed for the night, this uptown subway train proved hot and crowded.

Charley was misty. He had to hang on to one of those damned straps, exactly as if he were going to his office during the morning rush hour. Although the two women finally secured seats side by side close to where he swayed—although they shouted at each other through the hellish din of the train—he couldn't catch one word of what they were saying.

But they *looked* happy. . . .

He considered that he hadn't had nearly enough to drink. He considered that he had had just enough, as he put it, to "aggrivate" him.

He wondered what those girls were talking about, anyhow.

Him?

He oughtn't to stand for that.

Or perhaps it was Jim?

Oh, well, he'd pump it out of Edith later. For the present, let it ride!

§ 4. Gladys was asking Edith:

"Like dancing as much as the rest of us like it?"

The subway had leaped out of the earth's bowels and rode the air. Edith looked from a car window at the lights in passing flats . . . at the hurrying automobiles below . . . at the pavements full of people who must be bent on pleasure, because this was no hour for work.

"I'd like to dance," said she.

§ 5. At another place Gladys knew, they stopped for a drink between train and destination, so that Charley received no clear impression of the latter until some time after he had entered it. For her part, Edith did first note that its air was heavy with musk, and heavier with something—some other odour—which the musk couldn't quite conceal; but she noted

Koviloor Acadamy
next the blare of dance music, and this temporarily sufficed to halt critical observation.

A negro attendant showed them to a table and took their orders. A negro jazz band played and chanted at the other end of the room. The lights were orange and low; the centre of the floor was jammed with dancers.

Charley stared into his rapidly fetched glass. To Edith, however, these people became gradually more distinct.

The majority were negroes: blacks, mulattos, quadroons, octoroons, men and women of every shade from ebony to those concerning whom—either because of art or ancestry—it was impossible to determine whether they were merely mildly brunette whites or members of that annually increasing army of mixed bloods who proclaim themeselves quite white, and are believed. Edith saw African males in immaculate evening-dress, whose steps were less negroid than those of the entertainer that had lately been her partner. She saw negresses in gowns as expensive and chic as any worn at the downtown night clubs. Sometimes thick lips were painted to seem thin; but mostly there existed no attempt at such beguilement: the kinky hair had rarely been subjected to any alleged straightening, the sharp shins of these women were unrelieved by padding.

"Is this," Edith acidly demanded of her myopic cicerone, "a nigger dive?"

Gladys blinked. "It's run by a negro."

That exchange woke Charley. His smouldering eyes swept the floor.

"Why, that buck's got a white girl," he announced. "And there's a white man waltzing with a yellow wench!"

It was true . . . and in more than the instances he designated. Artist Oswald Beckstein embraced a black lass; that pimpled poetess who, at Gladys's tea, wanted—so her poem said—to take the universe in her arms: she had now her arms around a bronze Hercules.

"W-what's the world comin' to?" Charley asked of it . . . and unsteadily rose.

Miss Smyser, as an essential part of it, only blinked at him and countered:

"Why shouldn't negroes have their pleasures like the rest of us?"

"But *with* the rest of us?" insisted Charley.

"These whites want it. They pay for it."

"Then you can't call 'em whites!"

Koviloor Acadamy

"Charley!" Edith pleaded. It was pretty bad, but she didn't want a scene.

Two women waltzed by together—of different races. Two men. . . .

"By God——" began Charley.

Gladys fled.

"Come on out 'o this!" Charley ordered Edith.

She got up. They started for the door; but it was some distance away, and, before they could reach it, the music had changed. Between them and the means of escape a group of vociferous people of both colours was gathered—a group of staring, time-clapping, shouting people.

Charley stood as high a-tiptoe as he could and himself stared over the intervening shoulders of the taller folk. A white man and a negress were dancing the "Black Bottom," and the white man was Mr Ming.

Coming back to earth after a full two minutes' gaze, Charley gripped Edith's arm.

"Don't look!" he commanded. "Don't *look!* It's not fit to be seen!"

He dragged her round the human barrier and out of the hall.

In the street, he told her about it.

"I'm through with dancing," he vowed in conclusion. "The . . . what'd she call 'em? . . . intellectually elect! I'm clean *through* with it! And you are, too. D'you hear? No more of it for either of us—*ever!*

§ 6. They continued, after their own fashion, to love each other: they had sacrificed too much to gain each other, risked too much, broken too many of the conventions that both inherited, not to go on loving: as the Spring warmed them, it brought moments when their love was stronger, was even something finer, than it had ever been before; it rose and fell, as all love does; but it did not fall so deep that it could not reclimb. And yet, notwithstanding this—almost, it seemed dependent upon it—their quarrels continued, too; the heat of these precisely equalled the heat of the love that preceded and followed them; it was as if aversion had become the natural reaction from attraction.

There were occasions when this need to quarrel was not a need to quarrel with each other, when the joint streams could, if taken early, be diverted into a common channel, and on those

Koviloor Acadamy
occasions they directed them toward Jim. Now and again the waters of their wrath would beat in vain against the rock of his memory, find it so firm that it drove them back and set the two streams to struggling with each other after all; but there were other times when the device served, and when they spent themeselves in an alliance of anger. They passed hours in confessing, each to each, their opinions of him, in jeering at him, denouncing him, to the walls of their poor living room, dissecting his past motives, sneering at his present success, prophesying his future downfall. Sometimes their domestic talk would run for days upon nothing but Jim.

The first effect in Edith of reflection on her former husband's good fortune was a strengthening of her resolve to have Charley succeed. He must succeed. If he could not do it alone, she must somehow find means to help him: he must be more successful than Jim.

Although she had had her black moments since their marriage, she had never seriously doubted the final triumph of Charley and his invention. She had feared that circumstances might be for a long while against him, but she believed in the receiver, in the ability of merit to achieve commercial success; and she had never thought that failure might be inherent in Charley. Now, however, she saw that her resolve was taken with a sort of desperation, and she knew that a desperate hope can spring from nothing but an immedicable doubt. She remembered her father, and her girlhood passed in an atmosphere of defeat.

Was Charley a failure, too?

She remembered fatuous Uncle Gregory, blundering into dentistry and saved only by his marriage; her Uncle Morty, keeping his nose above water solely by seizing the life belt that had been flung to his niece; her stupid, discomfited aunts, living, after all, Christian lives, but on the moody charity of a swindler; her brothers, one in hiding, a second working his life out for an exacting wife, the third a spiritual coward in a small town parish. Was it possible that these had infected her with the bacillus of frustration? Was the disease in the Moxton blood? She had heard that persons predisposed to tuberculosis seemed born with an especial terror of that ill. Perhaps her innate horror of failure was some such expression of her doom, some such instinctive protest against the inevitable.

No, it could not be that; it was Jim. If she had never met

Koviloor Acadamy
him, she would certainly not be where she was to-day, and if she had not been Jim's divorced wife, old man Vanaman would have received her into his family, and all would now have been well. As it was, why had she so readily assumed that Charley would be a success? She knew little about his past business career save what he himself told her; she knew nothing about radiography now. Supposing the invention proved useless: they could not be completely certain that Charley's father had not heard of the marriage and held his tongue. He might already have drawn a will leaving his money to Mame.

§ 7. Then Diana Wentworth, whose loyalty had not been dampened and whose admiration continued firm, insisted on taking them to a meeting of the New Radical Club.

This was an organisation that had had a troubled career. It was started by a number of uptown young men—mostly the offspring of moderately well-to-do tradespeople—who somehow learned that there was such a thing as corruption in politics. The young men were at first shocked by this knowledge, but they soon became accustomed to it and regarded it as their own peculiar discovery and possession. They found that a communication of small portions of it to their middle-class friends shocked those friends, and the young men thus experienced that delicious thrill which is entailed in shocking other people without discommoding oneself. They acquired the habit. It struck them that to expose political corruption without having to meet bad company was to be Liberal, and that to champion the cause of the poor without risking poverty was to be Radical. The shock of their first discovery left them with an appetite for more shocks, so they shocked themselves again by calling themselves Radicals and forming a club to which women were admitted. In order to keep up their supply of ammunition, they invited the writers of the literature of revolt to address them, and in order to show to the world their own limitless democracy, they set up their clubhouse not on Fifth Avenue, but on Union Square. Union Square, they said, was positively and traditionally proletarian.

Radicalism, however, is like most things that are easily started: it is hard to stop. These young men from uptown felt they must demonstrate their sincerity by accepting to membership in their club at least a few persons from downtown: of course not many, at first, and only the fellows that

Koviloor Acadamy
could at once be interesting specimens for study and wear clean collars; the sort of people that can give you a feeling of your superiority in recognising the brotherhood of man, without offending you by expecting to be introduced to your sister, or saving the fish-fork for the ice-cream. So North and South, East Side and West, began to mingle in the halls of the New Radical Club in proletarian Union Square, and gradually the interesting specimens that knew how to behave smuggled into membership interesting specimens that behaved very badly, and the original radicals, one by one, received their final shock, lost interest, and retired.

The "fresh lot," as the founders of the club sometimes spitefully described them, were immensely democratic. They could not help being, for they were school teachers dissatisfied with their pay; dramatists from Akron, Ohio, against whom the lords of the theatrical trust entered into elaborate conspiracies; authors whom publishers and magazine editors and successful writers had combined to keep out of print; inventors of fresh philosophies, fresh religions, fresh spelling-books; male spinsters; women desperately unmarried; all the hopeless chaff of respectable boarding houses anxious to espouse any cause that they could be deceived into believing new. They were excellently fitted to maintain a Radical Club on Union Square, but they did not have the money, so they moved into part of a house on Eighth Avenue.

This migration left behind it some of the "fresh lot," because a few of the fresh lot considered Eighth Avenue undignified, and others did not like to walk through that part of town by night. Nevertheless, their places were filled by persons that lived in the neighbourhood and other places were made for more, so that there was now a still fresher lot which was uncomfortably shouldering the merely fresh. And, as the fresh lot had short memories in the small matter of dues —being engrossed in schemes for world-regeneration, how could they remember details, or, when reminded, attend to them?—the membership was again being extended and the thin edge of the freshest lot already inserted.

It is a curious thing about clubs that they defy the Spencerian laws; their evolution is never upward, and bad blood grows worse and perpetuates itself at the expense of good. In this organisation, the fresh lot called themselves Socialists, believed in municipal reform and shuddered at the political ideals of the fresher lot; the fresher lot scoffed at

Koviloor Acadamy
the ultra-montane tendencies of the new, called themselves Socialists, were party men—Socialist Party men of the my-party-right-or-wrong school—and were horrified by the iconoclastic doctrines of the freshest lot; the freshest lot ridiculed both the fresh and the fresher, preached Communism, and at least said that they trembled at nothing. In brief, the New Radical Club was still conservative, but was in grave danger of becoming radical.

"The next thing we know," said Diana Wentworth, who belonged to the fresh lot, "we'll be letting in a lot of Revolutionists."

She was to be the chief speaker on this evening and she undisguisedly considered Edith's company and Charley's a personal tribute.

"I'm going to speak on Fatherhood," Miss Wentworth added. "The Inutility of Fatherhood. I am to open the discussion and of course I'll advocate Archibald van Houyz's point of view."

"Van Houyz?" repeated Edith. "Do you mean the man you said believed in simplified spelling?"

"He's not just 'a believer' in it," Diana corrected: "he has invented a system of his own. It's a new system. It is based on——"

"I thought you told me his name was Hodge."

"It was, but he's changed it. Sylvia Tytus thought van Houyz was more euphonious, and I agreed with her. So he's changed it. He'll be there to-night, and Sylvia, too. You'll meet them. They're wonderful types."

§ 8. By removing the folding doors that once separated them, two room had been thrown into one, and a couple of other doors, connecting the rear room with an anteroom behind, gave space, when opened, for the overflow of the audience. The walls were severely bare of decoration, as the walls of so serious an institution ought to be, but betrayal spoke from a mute mechanical piano, at present shoved into one corner, for, on certain evenings of the week, these Radicals turned from righting the wrongs of Labour in the next generation to making gayer their own condition: dancing delighted even the newest lot and most revolutionary. Rows of wooden chairs had been placed in both rooms, and seated on these chairs, or filling the aisles and lounging at the windows, were the devotees of freedom.

Koviloor Acadamy

If they did not belong to the mass, they formed one. It was only after some time that the observer could separate them, individualise them, and then they had first to be divided into their groups of freshest, fresher and fresh. Here were the pale, dissatisfied faces of the new lot; strained, nervous faces they were; dissatisfied with life because it had made them respectable and withheld the rewards of respectability, souls sick and groping for an unknown remedy. Here, in almost equal numbers, were the newer lot, equally dissatisfied, but with the tense face of the zealot, whose faith no fact or argument can move, whom defeat can only stimulate, and who is certain he can effect a cure if only he can force the world to try his panacea. And here, finally, were the few newest, the long-haired, unshaven, careless apostles of denial, the only happy faces in that audience. Seated, the men and women looked extraordinarily alike and like neither men nor women.

At first there was no one that sufficiently stood out to excite Edith's curiosity. Then Diana plucked at her sleeve.

"There's Archibald van Houyz and Sylvia," she said.

Van Houyz was standing in the centre of the front room: he almost always stood and he always chose the centre of a room. Looking at him, the first thing that Edith noticed was that here was a man wearing knickerbockers in New York, and in the evening; the next was that, in place of shirt and waistcoat, he wore a yellow jersey or sweater of pale yellow silk. This garment might have been affected to convey the idea that he was what his least sophisticated admirers would have called "a rough diamond," or "one of Nature's noblemen," but it failed because it was quite immaculate, because his Norfolk jacket was clearly fresh from the pressing-iron and because van Houyz's face completed the denial. He had astutely hidden as much of it as he could by combing far over his forehead his curling black hair and by cultivating—there is no other word for it—a curling brown vizor; yet his piscatory eyes shot through this mask, his nose was long and thin, and when he smiled—as he was continually doing—one saw that his upper lip was curiously thin and his lower curiously thick. He had his arm—too tightly, Edith thought—around the shoulder of a woman that patently felt proud of this attention, a woman whose most notable feature was her teeth: there were too many of them and they were grouped at haphazard.

Koviloor Acadamy
To avoid expressing an opinion, Edith directed Diana's attention elsewhere.

"Who's that man sitting in this hot room with an ulster on and its collar turned up above his ears?"

"That's George Andre," said Diana. "He's French: he's from Alsace. He used to have an *s* in the end of his first name and an accent on the *e* of his last; but Archibald simplified them for him. He's a Trotskeyite."

"What's a Trotskeyite?" Charley asked.

Diana hesitated for but the fraction of a second.

"A Trotskeyite," she explained, "is a person that believes in Trotskeyism."

"And just what is Trotskeyism?" urged Charley.

Diana's answer was to indicate another Radical.

"There's Dorsey Dutton," she said. "He's a poet."

Probably nobody ever had the courage to "do" George IV of England in stained glass, but, if anybody had, that George IV would have resembled this tympanismic radical. He was proudly exhibiting his courageous radicalism by sitting in the doorway to the anteroom with a diminutive girl, a brunette, perched on his knee. Their relative sizes suggested that her relation to him was that of the tiny cherub which one sometimes sees carved at the feet of the recumbent figure on a royal tomb. Behind this pair stood a young man in a stock; he had an intellectual forehead and was palpably bored.

"And that one's the editor of a revolutionary paper," said Diana—who was nevertheless obviously beginning to be preoccupied by the approach of her hour for lecturing—"and he thinks himself above all of us. But don't bother about him. Come over here: I want you to meet Archibald and Sylvia."

Van Houyz had belonged to the Radical Club since the latter half of its Union Square days; he was a part of the institution, and paying members had a right to as much of himself as he could give them: he, therefore, stood with a much-bestockinged leg planted on a chair-bottom for their delectation. Sylvia, the girl with the assertive teeth, was looking up into his piscatory eyes. With Charley he shook hands limply: Van Houyz did not like men, nor did men like him. Edith's extended hand he took in both his own.

"It is so sweet to meet you," he said. "We've all been hearing of how much you've done for Principle. Do you mind my saying that you oughtn't to wear quills in your hat? In the first place, they entail cruelty to birds, and in the

Koviloor Acadamy
second, you have such an interesting face that you ought to wear only the most unostentatious clothes in order not to detract attention from it." He twirled his beard. "Let it stand out," he said—"out, you know."

He had scarcely nodded to Diana; now he seemed to have forgotten Sylvia. They all sat in the front row of chairs, of which some fifty were arrayed as at a lecture, and Van Houyz pressed his body close to Edith's. It occurred to her that here was one of those who think that a divorcée of one husband is a willing prey to all men. She hated Van Houyz.

Charley was talking in a loud voice to Sylvia, who needed consolation.

"I was in Peking for a while during the rebellion," he was saying; "and once at the telegraph-office there——"

Edith knew the story. She noticed that one of a pair of men behind her was more interested in it than was Sylvia. The story was not complete when Diana was introduced by an informal chairman and began speaking.

"Fatherhood," she said, and impressively paused. "We all know the so-called duties with which men bolster up this man-imposed Right. We also are well aware of the inutility of it, under present conditions, as a profession. Where is the typical father, during the waking hours of his offspring? Is he at home? Does he give the benefit of his constant care and alleged superior knowledge? It is from him that the little one imbibes the rudiments of eating and walking, and is it to him that it lisps its first prattling sentences? Who teaches it to call him Daddy? You must all agree with me that Fatherhood *in statu quo* is shorn of the glory of responsibility and is one of the most futile and undignified of trades."

She spoke in a conversational tone, pausing now and again to choose her words, but it was a question if her cultivation of the impromptu method, her pose of negligence, were not arranged to make more startling—for she obviously thought them startling—the things that she had to say. She was following van Houyz's advice about Edith's clothes and forbidding the grace of her phrases to divert attention from the meat of her ideas. She was serious and, had she not nervously held her head in a manner reminiscent of the late Cardinal Newman, would have remained handsome. . . .

"There ought to be nothing startling in doing away with inefficient fathers—I mean, in fatherhood under its present

Koviloor Acadamy

enthralled conditions," she went on. Her voice was really beautiful, and well modulated. "When the Plan was adumbrated to me by Archibald van Houyz, *I* wasn't startled. Individual fathers will, in the end, become group fathers, giving up their children to the mothers or to the state, since they do not seem fitted to the entire care of them—the wisdom of mother or state has not yet been definitely settled—and, by Co-operation, by working together for the common good of the on-coming generation, improve with concerted intelligence econonic and educational conditions and make of Fatherhood a thing even to proud of. I am quite hopeful that our Legislature in Albany will soon be brought to consider this vital subject seriously, for the laxity with which it has lately been regarded has already caused a baby-strike. . . ."

Charley scowled at Edith. One of the men behind him laughed: the laugh asked whether Charley suspected his wife of connubial sabotage. Edith blushed and drew back, but felt herself thus approaching closer to van Houyz and bent forward again.

Diana was going on:

". . . for that matter. The decreasing birthrate screams prophetically. One Type says: 'It's nothing but a small circle of selfish women among the very rich who refuse to become mothers because it keeps them from playing contract.' The Capitalistic Press puts the blame on poverty and the poor. Preachers call it Minds arid of Religion. What are we to believe? How about the wives and possible mothers who are Professional Women? These women cannot be called idle; they do not come under the Capitalistic Press's category; nor are their minds always arid of Religion.

"For my part, I call the Professional Woman just responsive to the Spirit of the Times. She doesn't want to sacrifice her utility to the Whole to her utility to the Few. Fatherhood inflicts penalties on Motherhood in the case of the Professional Type. I speak particularly of the Professional Type, which modern fathers would have revert into house-drudges, nursery-governesses, and dish-washers. You know what the simple result is, and, for my part, I blame the fathers: the typical Professional Woman does not have children."

When Charley saw that the speaker's revelations were to deal with professional women, he dismissed his suspicions of Edith and lost interest in this part of the speech. He thought such subjects as Diana had chosen ought never to be discussed

Koviloor Academy
in mixed company; but even the pleasant sense of listening to something improper did not long sustain him. He folded his arms and, chin on breast, fell asleep. Presently he snored. Edith nudged him sharply. The man behind laughed again, and Charley started.

". . . nor stop there," Diana was continuing. "Now, what is the duty of the state? Mothers are being yearly discouraged by the heedless attitude of the state and of fathers. It is the plain duty of the state, in order to protect the future of the race, to pay a salary to mothers and make of Fatherhood a useful profession.

"Mormonism has worked out its problem of plural marriages. So long as the country was rugged and labour-extravagant, wives in group-form and children in the mass were an economic asset instead of a liability. Now manufactures have replaced agriculture: it is an expense to keep wives and rear children. There need have been no legislation to prove to the Mormons that plural marriages do not now pay. What Mormonism has done, we can do. The time has come. The modern father cannot much longer remain the *pater familias* of the Mormon Church, as it were. He must yield to the Call of the Century: he must become a useful Member of Society."

Charley wriggled in his chair.

"Is it fair," asked Diana, with flushed cheeks, "for the mother to bear all the burden of this training? When shall the father do his share? When shall Fatherhood bend its concentrated attention to the Finished Product of the Future Generation?"

Only an angry glance from Edith stopped Charley in the midst of a broad yawn. He was fidgeting painfully. At last he could sit still no longer.

"Excuse me a minute," he said to Sylvia Tytus and hurried out to get a drink. . . .

"What is the remedy?" Diana proceeded. "The remedy is that discovered by Archibald van Houyz and Bernard Shaw: it is Subsidised Fatherhood. According to van Houyz's Plan, we should have a law to force the father to bear precisely half the burden of the rearing of the child. That is, the working-hours of the day would be evenly divided, and Fatherhood would assume its share of the responsibilities of the Home. Finally, van Houyz's Plan would provide for some type of salaried Fatherhood, under which

Koviloor Academy
prospective fathers would be examined and certified and, on proving the performance of their duties, be paid therefor by the state which they have thus benefited. The same course would be followed with regard to mothers, and each parent would be compelled to contribute a tithe of the joint weekly income for the future use—not the present needs—of the offspring: a sort of savings-bank account would be opened. In this way, when the boy became a father, he would have something on which to start a household, and when the girl became a mother she would be automatically compensated" —Diana repeated that phrase—"Automatically Compensated for her Quondam Economic Dependence."

It was evident that Miss Wentworth was approaching the climax of her address. Coming suddenly in the calm flow of an informal talk, "Automatically Compensated for her Quondam Economic Dependence" was like the thunder that presages a shower. The New Radical Club cocked its ears, and cocked them not in vain, for Diana, with her chin thrust even farther forward now than the Cardinal's, concluded:

"Van Houyz doesn't propose that the state should take over complete charge of the children. It is his theory that its parents can do for a child what no one else can, and that even Fatherhood can become useful from an altruistic and economic standpoint. What he proposes is that trained experts appointed by the state should help the father, at least at first, to the realisation and comprehension of his true responsibilities. And all this he proposes—all this vast Plan—in the knowledge that the free union of a man and a woman can become efficient only when Motherhood and Fatherhood become twin glories and when the woman is not Economically Dependent on the man."

The man behind Charley's empty seat was inquiring of his friend:

"How about when the man's economically what-d'-you-call-it on the woman?"

Scarcely anybody heeded this: all the fresh lot of members were applauding their protagonist, even the fresher lot were in startled agreement with her, and the freshest were still too polite to interfere. Edith, however, listened. The only effect the speech had had on her was to weary her without lessening her personal regard for the speaker. She condemned Diana's ideas, she condemned all ideas that were new to her, as absurd; but she condemned Charley, *in absentia*, more severely for

Kovilpoor Academy
having manifested a weariness which she had been at pains to conceal. Without a word, a woman can convey to any man, even to such a man as van Houyz, her aversion for him: Edith had finally impressed hers on the philosopher, and he was again caressing Sylvia Tytus. There was nobody to talk to, and so she listened to the men behind her, much as she had listened to chance talk at Gladys Smyser's tea; what she heard was as disconcerting as what she had heard from the two artist-women at "The Beatrice."

"Let's beat it," said one man. "That's the whole show. There's no story in it."

They were evidently newspaper reporters.

"You never can tell," said the other. "It's a queer gang: something's liable to crack any time. They all talked free love last week."

"What? These male old-maids? Do they believe in free love?"

"Of course they do. It's so cheap, you see. Oh, they're a thrifty lot, even if they are only the foam on the near-beer."

"All right, then, let's blow off the foam and get some real beer, like our friend that went out. Did you ever see 'Secret Drunkard' written over a man as large as it was written over him?"

The second man snorted.

"Said he was in Peking during the revolution, that one," he sneered. "He's seeing things. I was there through the whole show. By the time it was over, I knew every white man in the city well enough to call him by his first name and borrow his spare pyjamas—and this fellow wasn't any more there than the office cat."

§ 9. Charley was beckoning to Edith from a distant doorway. She joined him there: his breath was heavy with whisky, and his face was purple.

"Don't let's wait, D'ana," he said, thickly. "'M ashamed of her." He wagged his head. "I know," he said. "Been standin' here doorway. Don't you ever come here again. 'Baby-strikes!'—An' 'free unions.' I'n't marriage good 'nough for her? I know what she means all right, all right. D'ana's not a fit person f' my wife 'sociate with. Come on home."

Koviloor Acadamy

NINTH CHAPTER

THEY were nothing new to her, the things that the reporter had said. Having heard them, she realised that they had for some time been darkening the background of her consciousness. But the reporter had brought them forward. Though they would have troubled her grievously had she thought them hers alone, their hurt could have been nothing to what it was now that she knew them to be visible to the passing stranger. It was not enough that she have a secret shame: her shame must become a publie betrayal; her pride must suffer with her heart.

She could not bring herself to speak at once to Charley; at least for the present, her loathing of his condition was too strong: she did not dare to open her lips for fear of what might pass them. She had seen him before made merry by drink, made sanguine, made affectionate, and these manifestations had been, on the whole, welcome. To-night he had reached a later stage of the alcoholic, beyond even that which he had attained in Harlem, and for the first time she had an appreciation of what those earlier stages meant, of how they led to this one, of how the earlier could less and less frequently be regained. All the way back to their sordid home, she let him uninterruptedly maunder to her; when he thickly demanded a reply, she made none; when he accepted her silence as a confession of some sort of guilt that he felt more deeply than he could define, she held her tongue. She let him run on while he clumsily undressed and when he tumbled into bed beside her. She got up, put out the light that he had forgotten to extinguish, lay down again and remained dumb while his monotonous voice babbled into sleep, came back, stumbled, ended in a final snore.

He lay there sodden and stertorous. His breath was foul. It was a cold night, and with his first drowsiness he had dragged the blankets about himself, leaving her shivering.

She was awake for the better part of the night, wondering what she should do in the morning, and on all the mornings

Koviloor Acadamy
that were to follow. What should she say to him? Of what use could any words be? If he was a drunkard, her upbraidings, even her appeals, would only drive him forward to more drink: she confirmed that by recalling a dozen past experiences with him, imperfectly apprehended then, now nakedly revealed. If he was a liar and a lying braggart—there is no other kind of braggart—that was a thing done, not to be changed: he had committed himself to his lies with his every acquaintance. Her untrained mind followed no course of logical reasoning: it darted back and forth among the strands of the web that had caught it. Everybody that they knew he had made familiar with his lies; but did everybody—did anybody, except that reporter—suspect them to be lies? She found her pride basely forced to share in his deceptions; to bolster them; to hide them; if need should be, to brazen them out beside him. Perhaps only a few people guessed; perhaps—people were abominably, sneakingly polite, but perhaps not many knew of his drunkenness. If, on the other hand, they did guess. . . .

She wheeled back to hatred of him. The fault that a wife has detected in her husband needs but its recognition by a stranger to become unendurable to her. She looked at the loudly heaving mass of covers that lay so close beside her. A passing train on the elevated railway drowned his snores, but lit up his puffed and swollen face as by a lightning flash. It was stupefied, horrible.

It was pitiful, too. Quite unreasoningly she realised that, and immediately realised nothing else. She had staked so much on him; he was the hand she had dealt herself in the game of life; she could not afford to put it down and retire; she had to bet on it all that remained to her. After all, the force that had wrought these things in Charley was a force created by his love for her. If he had lied, he had lied to win her; if he drank, it was for strength to bear the hardships imposed by the results of his love for her. This was Jim's work: if Charley and she had met when she was free, none of these troubles would have come upon them; if Jim had not married her, Charley's father would have received her in his house, poverty would not have so much as touched them, no living soul would have dreamed that their intimacy was once illicit. The darkness was hiding his face again, and she could remember that she loved him.

Had he lied? What proof was there that he had lied? The

Koviloor Acadamy
sneering word of an unknown newspaper reporter, a man whose face she had not even seen. Why was it not the reporter that was braggart and liar? She felt ashamed that she had doubted Charley. . . . As soon as his father died, this hideous strain would be over, and with the need of liquor the use of it would end. . . . She would say nothing, do nothing until——

She fell asleep. She did not waken until ten o'clock, and then she found that Charley had got up and gone breakfastless to his office.

§ 2. He came back late, having postponed his return to the last possible minute. He had taken, on the way home, enough whisky to steady his shaken nerves, but he looked ill, and, though firm in his denunciation of the New Radical Club, he was abjectly penitent for his drunkenness.

"It was Jim that got me started drinking," he said. "Think of that: Jim! I never drank a drop till he taught me. He was always saying a whole man could be temperate. A whole man! He meant a man like himself, a man without any red blood in his veins!"

Edith felt a savage joy in Jim as a scapegoat.

"Of course he did," she agreed: "a man like that can always stop when he's had enough. He was always as cold as an icicle."

They talked of Jim for some time. It eased them.

"Still," said Charley at last, "I'd cut out Diana if I were you, dear. A woman with her ideas isn't fit company for you, you know."

Edith did not like Diana's loose opinions of marriage, but she liked Diana: Diana was her one remaining friend.

"I haven't anybody else left," she pointed out.

"Oh, well"—Charley wriggled his shoulders—"you'll find others, and, once the luck turns for us, you can take your pick. Drop her. I would. We have each other, after all."

§ 3. It was a beautiful April. The days were full of an invigorating sunshine, and the nights full of stars. With every sunrise, the Spring-longing tugged harder and harder at Edith's heart. Sometimes it strained in her throat, sobbed in it. The passion that had seized her in the Italian restaurant would not abate. She wanted to be free; she wanted to dance.

Koviloor Acadamy
Charley borrowed more money from Mame, and they dined nightly at some third-rate café; but never—for he made his choice carefully—at one where there was dancing. They came to know these restaurants—which flourish in the New York side-streets for relief from fatal tedium of all third-rate New Yorkers—as thoroughly as the inventor knew the parts of his invention. The cafés are really as tedious as are the lives of those that seek variety in them, but theirs is a different kind of tedium, and Edith and Charley enjoyed it. They were authorities. They were speedily connoisseurs of the strange food that was served with sharp sauces and of the thin wines that puckered their mouths with an astringency that they called dryness. They kept it up until Charley's digestion began to suffer.

At one of these places they had, one evening, to wait for a table, and Edith, in the shoddy reception-room, picked up the current number of a popular magazine. It contained several full-page reproductions of paintings in an exhibition lately opened, and one of these caught her eye.

It was the picture of a man and woman dancing the tango. They were in modern dress, and the treatment was far from commonplace or conventional, but Edith liked it because the artist had caught and conveyed, so that even she could feel it, the movement and spirit of the subject. Although the figures were indicated rather than delineated, she realised the presence of the man's arm about the girl, the touch of hand to hand, of thigh to thigh; she felt the music and knew the rhythm. Its perfect response to her mood made her forget her husband's objections to the form of dance that it celebrated, and she was about to hand the magazine to Charley for his approbation of the picture when she saw the fulsome legend printed beneath it:

"TANGO"

"This painting is attracting more attention from both critics and public than any other on the line, and is a mighty argument on canvas of modern grace in motion. The fortunate painter is James Trent."

So Jim's work had atttained that summit of success, reproduction in the five-cent magazines! She closed the book hurriedly and held it, lest Charley should see it. If Charley saw it, he would be too angry to enjoy his dinner. She knew

Koviloor Acadamy
what he would say ("Tango—the Harlem stuff'd be the rotten right thing for a man like *that* to paint!"), and she did not want to hear him say it. She felt that the picture had tricked her into her admiration of it, and that Jim had no right to paint an amusement that she wanted to practise and was forbidden. "The fortunate painter!" He was trying hard to make himself famous, and no doubt his chief incentive was a knowledge that his fame would annoy her. Probably he had a similar incentive for escaping fame while she remained his wife. It would be just like him. He had remained unsuccessful in order to hurt her; in order to hurt her, he became successful. Well, there was one consolation: he could not keep up his success.—What was Charley saying?

He was saying:

"The postman was at the door when I came home this evening. He had this letter for you. I forgot it. I'm sorry."

The thought of Jim had set her nerves on edge: she snatched the letter. It was a printed letter, and it was headed:

THE LEEG FOR WIMMINISM

(No Conexshun With Enny Femminist Asosiashuns)

Wimminism is a filosofie witch rekognizes
Wumun as the Life-Giffer and demands that
therefor she be the Life-Rooler!—Ower
Leeg insists on this Amendment to
the Kontzteetooshun of the United States:
"No rite, sivil or polytik, shal be denied
to enny person on akownt of sex."

"What is it?" asked Charley.

Edith, her anger gone, was puckering her brows over it and trying to guess the words by framing them with her lips.

"I can't exactly make it out," she said. "I *think* it's simplified spelling."

She handed the letter to Charley.

The letter announced van Houyz, Sylvia Tytus, and Diana Wentworth as the Leeg's officers—without simplifying their names—and announced the existence of kommitties on the filosofie of Wimminism, art-dress, publisity, mekanick baysis of Wimminism, Sivik Staytus of Mutherhud, and a dozen

Koviloor Acadamy
other subjects, concluding with one on Wumun's Rite to Retane her one Name wen Married.

"One name?" read Charley. "What one's that?"

Edith had crossed to him and was looking over his shoulder.

"Perhaps that's their way of spelling 'own,'" she suggested. "I've heard there's a special league for having married women keep their own names: the Lucy Stone League."

"And what do these people want out of you?"

They wanted her, it was with difficulty deciphered, to join their Leeg.

"Well, I won't have it," said Charley. "I won't have my wife mixing herself up with a lot of scandalous lunatics. Their spelling's worse than their opinions. W-u-m-u-n! That sort of craziness might be catching."

Edith had not the least desire to join. She glanced again at the text of the letter.

"They spell one sound one way in one word and another way in another," she noted. "And they mispronounce so many words. If people must spell phonetically, why don't they phoneticize the correct pronunciation rather than the incorrect?"

That phrase slipped from her without thought. At the end of it she caught her breath: it was something that Jim had once said.

She never did tell Charley about the picture.

§ 4. She could no longer keep her eyes closed to the change in Charley. His fat was unhealthy, his expression fixed. His habitual chuckle had lost its old assertiveness, and he was becoming dirty in his personal habits. Nobody would invest in the receiver, and his father would not die.

"I wouldn't be surprised if he saw the last of all of us," she would sometimes say.

In her Charley noticed the occasionally recurring carelessness of her clothes.

"You ought to spruce up some," he told her. "You used to look swell."

She turned on him quickly.

"Yes," she said—"when I was Jim's wife. I had some money then. You know, as well as I do, he used to give me all the money he made."

"I know he was a fool."

"He had that good point, anyhow," said Edith.

Koviloor Acadamy

But she went on hating Jim.

On a particularly bright afternoon, when the sunshine wooed her and the light airs lied to her, she had been wondering whether there was not some just ground for Charley's criticism of her dress, whether she was really doing so well in the matter of clothes as she could do on the money that was spared her. She went to the shops, determined to do better.

Her disappointment was keen. Everything that she wanted was far beyond her means. She walked along many miles of counters and corridors that displayed but two sorts of things: the sort she would not wear and the sort she could not buy.

It was when she came out of the last shop that she remembered the picture called "Tango," the picture by Jim, of which she had seen a reproduction in the magazine at the restaurant. She did not know what made her remember it; it seemed to her that nothing made her remember it, that the impression of this picture was an entity with a life of its own inherited from the artist, which had passed into her brain, lain for a few days dormant there, and was now malignantly asserting itself, was actually assuming at least temporary possession.

For she felt, quite suddenly, that she must see the original. She tried to tell herself that she wanted to see it in order to satisfy herself that it was really a meretricious piece of work, which had caught the popular fancy merely because it had cleverly appealed to the spirit of a passing fashion; but she knew that this was not the reason for her desire. She wondered if the reason was the influence of Jim; but she denied that Jim possessed any influence over her. Then she thought that the picture's fascination for her might lie in its presentation of something in which she was interested and in all the freedom, the successful joy, which dancing, since it was practically denied her, had come to symbolize; but she denied that, too, though she could find no convincing argument for this denial.

All the while she was walking toward the hall wherein the magazine had said that the picture was exhibited. At the shops, she had been tired; she was tired now; but she walked on.

She came to the hall and entered. She had no trouble in finding the picture: it was hung in the best light of the largest room, and there was a group of people about it.

The reproduction had been a good one, but the colours gave

Koviloor Acadamy
to the original a life and brightness that the reproduction lacked. . . .

Edith heard little broken sentences of approval from the group about the picture. Some of the persons speaking were persons that seemed to know good pictures; others seemed to know good dancing. One man among the admirers crooked his bald head, bent the fingers of his left hand and applied them to his right eye as if they were a miniature telescope. He spoke in crisp, academic sentences, which he meant all about him to hear.

"Alive," he said: "alive with grace, movement, music. The artist that painted it must have understood, not alone the rhythm of dancing, but also the rhythm of life. He understood them and painted them here."

To her young lover, a girl in the group—a girl in clothes somewhat ahead of the prevailing fashion—said the same thing. She said:

"That's some tango, that is."

Edith had never hated Jim as she hated him now. . . .

On her way to her Greenwich Village home, beside which the drays and surface-cars rattled all day long and the trains on the elevated railway screamed at regular intervals all night, she bought an evening newspaper and studied the advertisements that followed those classified as "Amusements." She counted the money with which she had been unable to buy clothes. Charley had not given her all of it; some she had saved, by painful denials and awkward subterfuges, from the living-expenses that he allowed her. He did not know how much it was. It was not much; it would not go far. Nevertheless, she decided that, without telling Charley, she would spend it for as many lessons as it would buy toward bringing her own dancing up to the standard of the moment.

Koviloor Acadamy

TENTH CHAPTER

For months past Edith had been eavesdropping upon everybody about her: she was listening for the things she did not want to hear. Nobody puts his ear at a keyhole to catch pleasant words, nor does anybody so placed remember such pleasant words as chance to reach him: Edith applied her ear to all that portion of the conversation of her acquaintances and neighbours which was not intended for her, and what remained in her memory was precisely so much as displeased her. From the day when she had a secret, she began to fear that other people would suspect it; and from the day when she feared other people would suspect it, she began to seek confirmation of her fears. She sought what she dreaded to discover.

It was, however, in the nature of Jim's success that some of the news of it should reach her through the designed highways of publicity. So the knowledge of the tango picture reached her; so reached her, on the morning after her visit to the exhibition, another piece of knowledge.

She and Charley had their hurried breakfasts—for their breakfasts were always hurried—in the living-room that looked out on the noisy Greenwich Village street. Charley would waken her with difficulty, urging her that he must not be late at the office; and she would at last crawl out of bed, thrust her stockingless feet into slippers, and fling about her her trailing yellow negligee, now stained by the preparation of many breakfasts previous to this one. Her hair unbraided, her eyes half closed by sleep, she would light the gas-stove and boil the coffee and eggs, which she took from the supply kept in the cupboard where her dresses were hung. While she was at this task, her husband would grunt his way into his clothes and go out to buy a newspaper at the corner, generally returning with the traces of a morning bracer on his breath. He would glance at the chief headlines of the paper on his way upstairs and then, when he sat down on the sofa to eat the food that she handed him, would give Edith the

Koviloor Academy
paper to read while he ate—for they economised on newspapers now, the understanding being that the journal was to be surrendered to Charley for his further study on his way to work.

This is what happened on the morning following Edith's sight of the picture. The living-room, as usual, was still in the disorder of the preceding evening and heavy from the odours of the night. Clothes that Edith had taken off at twelve o'clock and not yet put away were lying across chair-backs with a brazen intimacy. Charley, fully dressed, was perched on the edge of the sofa, ready to spring for the door and hurry toward his office as soon as he should have gulped the last mouthful of the coffee that he perpetually complained of because it was too hot: his cheeks had now lost their colour; they had become leathery, and there were heavy bags of darkened skin under his prominent eyes. Edith looked her age: she lolled in a chair, her dressing-gown falling open over her nightgown; her legs crossed, showing a bare shin, the slipper half off the raised foot and moving up and down as she closed and opened her toes in it: she pushed her hair away from her face and held the newspaper within an inch of her nose.

She turned to an inside page, glanced at it, gasped. The paper fell into her lap.

"Well," she said, "I never!"

Charley looked up, his cup at his lips.

"What's wrong now?" he asked.

It was not to be concealed as the picture in the magazine had been. He had to have his newspaper to read in the subway; could she have kept it from him without arousing his suspicions, she would not have done so, for this was news of an importance that demanded communication. Indeed, she did not consider suppression: before she had time to think at all, the paragraph she had seen wrenched from her that exclamation in the forgotten patois of her up-state kindred. She handed him the newspaper, indicating with her forefinger a few lines in the department called, "What Society Is Doing":

JAMES TRENT MARRIED

Rising Young Artist Weds Miss Elizabeth Bowen

Mr James Trent, the rising young artist whose portrait

Kovilloor Acadamy

of Bishop Peel won such praise from the critics last winter, was yesterday quietly married in Trinity Church, Philadelphia, to Miss Elizabeth Ordway Bowen, only daughter of Theodore Howard Bowen, the well-known yachtsman. Only a few persons, all immediate relatives, were present. Miss Bowen herself is an enthusiastic sailor and has a rare talent for miniature painting. Mr and Mrs Trent are sailing this morning on the *Ile-de-France* for a long stay abroad.

Edith expected an outbreak; it would have relieved her had there been one; but Charley, though the muscles of his face worked spasmodically, folded the newspaper and put it into his pocket without a word of comment. She could not bear this; she could not bear the pain that the action showed him incapable of appreciating.

"What do you think of that?" she shrilly demanded. Her face was yellow. "Married!" She laughed. "And in a church, if you please. He's actually had the nerve to marry some nice girl—and some nice girl with money, too! I'll bet he didn't tell the minister he was a divorced man. I'd like to tell his wife a few things—his *wife!*" She stood up. She raised her voice as if she intended to shriek her message to the bride across the house-tops of New York. "Mrs James Trent, Number Two!" She reverted to her second husband: "I asked you what you thought of it. Can't you talk? What do you think of it?"

Charley, too, had risen, but he had risen to go out.

"Don't yell so," he cautioned. "Do you want everybody in the house to know about it?"

Her answer was to go to him and try to take the newspaper from his pocket.

"Let me look at it," she said. "I want to read that again."

He seized her wrists. There was a sharp struggle.

"Stop it!" he commanded. "Why do you want to read it again?" His eyes flashed a jealousy that he had more than once felt of late. He twisted her wrists with unnecessary force and brought from her a cry of pain. "What do I think about it? I don't think anything. I haven't got time to waste on such people. It won't come to any good, that's a sure thing."

The pain in her wrists gave her some of the relief she required; she gathered some of the remainder from his prophecy

Koviloor Acadamy
of evil. She stopped trying to regain the newspaper, but her hysteria, though diminished, was not yet ended.

"I'm sorry for that girl, whoever she is: the poor thing don't know what she's got," said Edith. "Married again—actually! And she must have money. And the papers don't say I divorced him: they don't even say he ever had anything to do with a divorce."

What now moved Charley to quicken his departure was the fear that he would betray his jealousy. He was held merely by the greater fear that, if he did not partially quiet his wife, she might still rouse the house and make a scene.

"Of course, it was some newspaper friend of Jim's that printed that account," he said.

"'Rising young artist!'" Edith scornfully quoted. "Well, it's the end of him; he's jumped too high this time; he's sure to come down now. He can't keep on fooling people forever, and he can't fool his wife for more than a month or two. He'll starve in a garret once she's got rid of him."

"Sure he will," agreed Charley. "People'll find out what he is. No fear of that." He wanted to get away and get another drink. For the first time he was fully realising what an important part in their mental lives this man had been playing ever since they combined to swear him out of their existence. "I guess his picture of that Bishop didn't amount to much," he concluded. "*I* never heard of it."

"You?" She spoke quickly and from mere nervous excitement, but with superior tone. "Of course not. You don't know anything about pictures."

Instantly the fire that Charley had tried to master shot up beyond his control.

"Of course I don't." he snapped. "I'm a man, and do a man's work. Pictures! Where did *you* learn anything about them? All you ever knew you got from him. Perhaps you'd like to go back to him and learn more!"

It took another half hour to heal the wound thus made, and it sharpened Charley's craving for a drink to a pitch that was almost unendurable. At the first sign of returning quiet, he left her with the briefest of perfunctory kisses.

On his dash to the neighbouring speak-easy, and during most of his day at the office, he was thinking:

"Here's this fellow making a good thing out of his work and marrying a swell, and what I get is what he's used up and thrown away."

Koyiloor Acadamy
As Edith, at the window, watched her husband's swollen figure cross the street immediately after he had left her, something was reminding her of what the reporter at the Radical Club had said of him, and was setting against this a mental picture of Jim and a young girl standing before a clergyman at the altar-rail. . . .

She waited for fifteen minutes. Then she went to the corner news-stand and bought a copy of each of New York's morning newspapers. As she paid the boy, who knew both her and Charley, she asked:

"Did my husband get some other papers to-day? I mean, when he went by a little while ago?"

The boy pocketed her money before replying:

"Yes'm: he got 'em all, same as you did."

She went back to her rooms and ran feverishly through the papers, but, although all printed the news of the wedding, none mentioned Jim's previous marriage. Indeed, the wording was in each case so similar to every other that it was plain that a common source had supplied them. Once, in her anger, Edith thought of telephoning her story to the newspaper offices as she had once before telephoned it, but the failure of the former attempt was against its repetition, and the friendly tone of the wedding-notices convinced her that the endeavour would be futile. Throughout that long morning she had lain on her disordered bed, leaving the room as she had wakened to find it. Dumbly she nursed a wound, the justice of which she could not understand.

§ 2. At three o'clock in the afternoon the landlady's maid-of-all-work opened the door without knocking and thrust in her frowsy head.

"Summin t'see yuh," she said: she spoke simplified spelling.

Edith had come to the living-room, but was lying on the sofa; the newspapers, which she had brought with her and re-read, were scattered on the floor.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"Dunno," said the maid; who had not liked Edith since she began to take care of her own rooms, and, consequently, to cease tipping.

"Didn't you ask?"

The maid was a product of the East Side, but she was also the daughter of natives of the Central Russian Plateau, and had a face that was as stolid as a Chinaman's.

Koviloor Acadamy

"No," she said.

"Is it a lady?"

"Yessim."

"Wait," said Edith.

She went into the hall and cautiously leaned over the balustrade of the stair-well. In the dim light below, she could see Diana standing.

Edith had not seen Diana since the night of the former's unceremonious desertion at the New Radical Club. She knew that Charley had never abated his disapproval of the acquaintanceship, and that, if he heard of this visit, he would dislike it; but she determined not to give up her last friend for a situation that had already demanded and received so many sacrifices. A few hours ago, it was true, she would have denied herself to any caller; but the bitterness that cries for isolation had given place to the loneliness that aches for companionship.

"Bring her up," said Edith, "in about five minutes."

"I'll tell her t' come up," the maid compromised.

Edith hurried back to the living-room. She gathered together the clothes of the night before, which were still lying on the chairs where she had flung them, made them into a great ball, and tossed them into the bedroom. She was about to follow them and make some sort of toilet when there was a knock at the door: evidently the maid, heedless of instructions, or wilfully disregarding them, had told the visitor to come up at once. Edith was annoyed, but postponement would now be incivility.

"Come in," she said.

It thus happened that Diana found her hostess much as she had been on the morning when she announced her intention to divorce Jim. She was in her living-room; she was surrounded by open newspapers; she was dressed in the same yellow negligee. Edith thought of this and flushed, for she knew how different was this living-room from that other, and how that canary-coloured gown told the story of all that had occurred in the interim. A moment later she was still more embarrassed, for behind Diana's stood another figure: a man's.

"Oh," cried Edith, "I thought you were alone!"

Diana smiled graciously.

"Do be natural," she said. "We are all so much better when we are true to our type. It's Archibald."

It was Archibald, but Edith should have been pardoned for

Koviloor Acadamy
her failure to recognise him. Except that he wore a flowing bow-tie of salmon-pink, he was dressed like the majority of his male fellow-citizens. His clothes, to be sure, had been too recently pressed, but they were almost inoffensive. He was wearing long trousers: the advocate of the Supremacy of Woman did not brave the New York daylight in knickerbockers.

"Oh!" said Edith again: she had to be natural, because it was too late to be anything else. "Do sit down," she said to van Houyz, and then, rapidly to Diana, she gave an excuse that she had just prepared for her defection on the evening of Diana's address. "It was mean of us to run away," she explained, "but the room got terribly close, and I thought I was going to faint. There wasn't any time to apologise. I hope everything's going on well at the club."

Everything, it seemed, was not going on well at the New Radical Club. The newest lot were becoming uncomfortably numerous.

"You see," said Diana, seated on the sofa beside the bland worshipper of womanhood, whose eyes, forgetful of a former rebuke, were fixed on Edith as she took a chair opposite her callers—"you see, they're getting in more and more of their own type, and they don't care how they do it, either. At the last meeting, some of them proposed an out-and-out Anarchist for membership, and when we found that one of the seconders of the nomination was a man that hadn't been elected a member yet himself, but had only just been proposed, they all got angry and said we were taking our stand on a mere quibble. They said we were using Capitalistic Methods. We're going to resign."

"You?" asked Edith, vaguely. She had been hoping for a sympathetic interview with Diana alone; all this talk about an organisation for making the world happy a generation hence seemed far away from her own unhappiness and decidedly less important.

"Yes," said Diana, unriddling the pronoun: "Archibald and Sylvia Tytus and me."

"They don't understand Woman," said van Houyz. "They don't give her her proper place. Would you believe it: they have an average of three men to two women on every committee, except the entertainment committee and the kitchen committee."

"We feel," said Diana, her violet eyes shining with earnest-

Koviloor Acadamy
ness, " that we should devote all our efforts to the really Great Work, so we are going to give up everything to the Wimminist Leeg. We're moving to a new Headquarters, and I've been helping in the moving. I got a substitute to take my place at the library while we did it. That," she somewhat mistily wound up, " is how I could get around here this afternoon."

They wanted Edith to join the League, and she had not replied to the circular-letter they had sent her. Why hadn't she replied and, please, wouldn't she join?

Edith tried to bring her throbbing brain to bear upon these schemes for the betterment of the world. She was sure they must have something to commend them, in spite of van Houyz, since they so completely absorbed the interest of a woman like Diana. Moreover, Edith did not want to seem to be putting Charley in a bad light. But she could accomplish nothing.

" I hardly know," she said. " I don't believe I can. I have so much to take up my time."

" I work in a library," said Diana.

The philosopher was clearing his throat.

" What we propose to do," he began, " is to restore Woman to her rightful position, the position she lost with the overthrow of the matriarchy."

He sketched life under the matriarchy in a half-dozen polished sentences. In scarcely a dozen more, he outlined the descent of Woman to the present time, and then, with Diana's admiring eyes always upon him and his eyes upon Edith, he talked for ten minutes on what the world would be when Woman once more ruled it. He dismissed victorious Woman's Suffrage with a gesture and showed battling Feminism the door with a smile: these were beneath his powers of dispute; he would none of them.

" Woman," he concluded, " has the instinct for Truth, which man has not, and nothing but the truth can make us free. Her reign will see the end of all tyrannies and all lies. It will all go—all: from the curse of capital to the deception of clothes. We shall be free and nude. And——"

Edith caught herself drawing the folds of her negligee around her.

" —true Chivalry will come again," said van Houyz. " Not that of the so-called Age of Chivalry, when Woman was a prisoner and called a queen; not the Chivalry of to-day, when Man pretends to worship her, while in reality using her for

Koviloor Acadamy
his pampered toy; but genuine Chivalry, when she shall be at liberty to do her own work and govern her own world."

Diana tore her glance away from him to deliver a question to Edith.

"Now will you join?" she asked.

"I'll have to think about it," said Edith, who had now made up her mind that, even should Charley permit her, she would not join anything to which van Houyz belonged.

"Good," said Diana. She rose, but she had a moment left for trivialities. "I see that miserable first husband of yours has remarried," she added.

Edith's assent was a nod.

"What a creature!" said Diana. "You didn't know him?" she asked of van Houyz, and, when the philosopher shook his head: "No? A perfect type. You know: the kindly sort that thinks he has done everything for his wife when he has given her all the creature-comforts he can afford, and then refuses to go out with her to a meeting because he says he needs the sleep in order to make more money next day.—How's Charley, dear?"

Edith said that Charley was quite well. She was thinking how ill he had looked that morning: how ill and unsuccessful.

"There's the fine type," Diana told van Houyz. "He shares his wife's work and pleasures. I'm sure he'll join the Leeg, too. You must bring him with you, Edith."

§ 3. That was one of those nights when Charley was expected to dine and sleep at his father's house. On such occasions, his custom was to go direct from his office to the Vanaman place in Lexington Avenue and not reappear in Greenwich Village until the following morning; but to-day he telegraphed Edith that he would do no more than take dinner with his sister and would be home by ten o'clock.

The things that occur day in and day out, even when they are discouraging things, tend, with their every occurrence, toward quiet; they draw us back from high emotions; the crab that loses a leg returns to his necessary burrowing in the sand, and, burrowing, grows another leg: Charley closed his desk with a feeling that the leg which had been torn from him had been replaced by a perfect duplicate, that his jealousy was shameful and unintelligible. It would all be sometime again to be gone through with, but it would all be gone through with: that was the routine of life. Meantime, he would pass

Koviloor Acadamy
so much of the evening with Edith as he could wrest from parental displeasure; it would be a difficult evening and would require adventitious assistance, but, if properly and tactfully met, what it ended in would be the purchase of another period of domestic peace.

He came into the lighted living-room with a parcel in his arms and a bulky something under his coat. He put the parcel on the table and kissed his wife with a renewal of the old-time passion.

"What's that?" she asked, indicating the parcel on the table.

He had already turned his back to her, hurriedly to go into the bedroom. He answered over his shoulder, one hand pressed beneath the bulge at the breast of his coat.

"A bottle," he chuckled. "I know it's been a bad day for you, and I thought you might want some hootch to brace you up."

She did want it. She had sipped a single synthetic cocktail before her solitary dinner, but she did not like to drink alone, even when, as now, she needed a stimulant, although her oppression had been more than the single cocktail could ease. She did not want Charley to continue his abuse of liquor; within a few minutes, she might object to his alcohol; but now she was in no mood to set good examples; she was in the mood to let the repair of her husband's habits wait upon better times.

"Thank you," she said.

He was in the bedroom and had shut the intervening door. She heard him in there at the bureau. He was at his bureau drawer: the bottom one. When he tried to close it, the wood, as she could hear, stuck as it always did. There was the sound of his kicking at it, and he swore about this a little more than was usual.

Edith's day had affected her much as Charley's had affected him. She went to the closed door; but he heard her hand on the knob and told her to go away.

"Can't I help?" she called.

"No, no!" he answered. "Go away. It's all right."

At that the drawer crashed shut, and he returned to the living room, flushed from his efforts and furtive.

"I just wanted to get something out of that drawer," he explained, "and it stuck the way it always does." He put his arm around her and kissed her a second time. "Have a good dinner?" he inquired.

"Yes," she said.

Koviloor Acadamy

"Where?"

"Just over at Bagnoli's. It was lonely, of course."

He patted her cheek in his protective fashion.

"What you been doing all day?"

It was his usual evening question; it had long since become a purely formal one—as, indeed, the monotony of their lives made inevitable—but to-night she was startled by it. She remembered Diana's visit and wondered if the inimical maid-of-all-work could have spoken of it to Charley as he came in. The maid-of-all-work could not know of his disapproval, did not know Diana's name, rarely addressed him when she chanced to meet him; but Edith's recent life had made her wary, the routine of deceiving her acquaintances had forced her into an attitude of suspicion toward her husband. Finally, Diana's mistaken praise of Charley had been most upsetting: Edith was wondering whether that praise was really mistaken, whether it was not ironic. . . .

"I've been doing nothing," she said.

"Alone all day?"

She met his eyes.

"Yes."

The monosyllable softened him. He squeezed her shoulder.

"Poor little woman! Well, it's bound to come right one of these days." He hurriedly unwrapped the parcel on the table, drew the cork of the bottle, and, when she had fetched a couple of glasses, poured out two drinks. "Here we are," he said.

The liquor burned her throat. She had always hated the taste of whisky; but she drank it eagerly.

"How's your father," she asked.

That, too, was a usual question, but, although it usually brought the same dull answer, it was daily more significant. To-night they dealt with it facing each other across that table, the glasses between them.

"About the same. I don't know. A little weaker, perhaps. It seems as if he'd never—it seems as if there'd never be any change."

They sat down. Charley lit a bad cigar. A second drink of whisky gave them courage.

"Did you hear anything more?" she asked.

"About the wedding? No. Did you?"

"No." She broke out: "I don't see why he should have all the luck." She poured forth her old abuse of him. "That kind of a man!" As she had so often done in these domestic

Koviloor Acadamy
conferences, she recited those charges against him which she had sworn to until they had become her unquestioned articles of faith—of about the only faith that was left her. "He'd even say that he kept out everything about the divorce from the papers as much to 'protect' me as *her!*"

Charley, pouring himself a trembling drink of whisky, chuckled a grim assent.

She felt that by this marriage Jim had again somehow tricked her. She had been so sure that, by her accusations in the divorce suit, she had made a second marriage impossible for him. Had he managed to conceal his divorce from the girl? Of course, she was a mere girl, younger than he was, much younger—Edith winced at the reflection—than Edith. Had Jim imposed upon the poor thing's innocence? Edith was convinced he had secured that publication of the news of the wedding as a message to her, as at once a proof that he was happy and that scandal could not touch him: "Although he'd say to everybody that he was doing nothing of the kind; that he wanted us happy and supposed we'd be glad to know he was."

"Do you think so?" mused Charley. "I wonder if he thinks as much about us as we think about him."

"Certainly he does!"

"Well, you know, from all we've heard, he's a pretty busy man just now, and——"

"He thinks about us all the time!"

"Just a moment, please. I was going to say a man couldn't be as busy as those girls at that tea said Jim was and yet be thinking about anything that's as much over and done with as that divorce."

"How do you know those girls told the truth? I don't believe they did. Besides, you can think about anything when you're only painting. *You're* doing more than painting, but *you* think about *him.*"

That statement was one to which Charley did not care to answer.

Edith went on again to speculate about the new wife of her former husband. Her speculations were unflattering.

"I wonder if he'll paint that woman," she concluded, "the way he painted me."

Charley chuckled.

"Not much. She won't let him. She's got the money. She's——"

Koviloor Acadamy
"Yes, she's got the money, and I guess he'll do anything to stick to that."

"Just a moment, please." Charley's eyes were bright with alcoholic indiscretion; his cheeks had momentarily lost their leathery hue and recovered a touch of pink; the pouches under his eyes were unnoticeable. "She's got the money, and when it's the wife that has the money she don't stay blind long. He can't keep it up. She'll get on to him soon and chuck him."

Edith saw the change in her husband. It improved him, but she knew its cause, and that frightened her. Those thoughts which had been immediately roused in her by the comment of the reporter at the New Radical Club sprang into a fresh activity. She saw Charley as a man talking automatically from a befuddled brain. The day-wrought submission to the ordinary course of events vanished before a red rage. Her brown eyes were like flames.

"A lot you know about it!" she said.

Charley looked at her. His mouth lolled with astonishment:

"But that's just what you said yourself this morning!"

Edith's laugh was strident. What did it matter? What did anything matter? She was still tired. The liquor seemed ineffective. She wondered if another drink would help. She was very tired. Life was too much for her. . . .

"Let's finish the bottle and go to bed," she suggested.

§ 4. In the night she woke to hear him fumbling at the bureau and began to recall that she had heard him doing this an hour ago, and perhaps once or twice before. The room was dark. She asked him what he was about.

"Just looking for something," he said, thickly. "Go to sleep."

The noise of the fumbling stopped for some seconds. She lay still. Charley seemed to be waiting until convinced that she had obeyed him. Presently his bureau drawer creaked open. Edith heard him draw a cork.

She continued to pretend to be asleep. That was so much easier. . . .

Koviloor Acadamy

ELEVENTH CHAPTER

THAT night left Edith in one of her fits of desperation about Charley. She blamed Jim for her husband's condition, because Charley had taken his first drink in Jim's company; but the growth of the habit she traced to the financial anxiety under which Charley so wearily laboured. Something must be done; he must be rescued, or he would descend to the gutter, and she would go mad; yet there was only one means of rescuing him: money must be procured—money, which they had both been vainly trying to procure for months past—and where was money to be had?

For several weeks there had been whispering in her brain a voice to which she would not listen; but to-day she was too tired to turn away from it. Those men whom she had, before she knew Charley, amused in order that they might amuse her: why should she not appeal to them?

She opened at their pages the book of her memory as easily as she had once closed it. Billy Namyna had always been a good fellow; the rich Tommy Kirkpatrick, although less generous, had always said that he would give her whatever she might want; George Mertcheson earned a large salary, had sworn that he loved her above everything else in the world and that he would do anything she asked. She had dropped them, the one for the other and the last for what really mattered—for Charley. She had taken care never to see them or communicate with them again; she had wanted to forget them, and had forgotten them; no sight or word of them had come to disturb her; but their wide promises had been unconditioned, and she had cancelled the friendship of none of them in anger. There was no reason that she could think of to prevent her approaching any one of them. Whatever she might know, they thought that she had given more than she received—that they were in her debt. She had not loved them; she had loved only the gaiety to which they held the keys; but of this she had kept them in ignorance; she did love Charley and must help him. He did not know of their exist-

Koviloor Acadamy

ence and need not know now. She would give nothing now: she would only levy on their mistaken but undoubting sense of past obligations, and then tell Charley that the money thus secured had been borrowed from distant Uncle Gregory: the money need be a mere loan; it could be repaid as soon as it had launched the Vanaman Sounder.

She hurried through her household work, despising every task. She was still nervous to the verge of hysteria and, remembering Charley's prescription for such trouble, she did what she had never yet done: went out to the nearest restaurant at which she was "known," bought a half-pint flask of whisky, took one drink before her solitary luncheon to give her an appetite, and another at the luncheon's end to assist digestion.

The prospect brightened. In its glow, she could tolerate the comparison between her present husband and his predecessor: Charley's reputation might have become one for laziness, lying, and hard drinking, but his faults were faults that she could now remedy. She was sure his long talks about his invention had given her a thorough knowledge of it. She gathered up some of the descriptive pamphlets that he always left lying about, and, after a careful toilet, started on her relief expedition. Her first advance was made toward Kirkpatrick, as the richest of the trio, and was made by telephone. From a nearby public telephone-station, she called up the apartment house in which he had, when she met him, been living for years.

"Mr Kirkpatrick's not living here now," the clerk told her.

Edith felt that surprise which we all feel in similar circumstances: we expect the people from whom we go away to remain precisely where we leave them. She felt that Kirkpatrick had no right to move.

"Gone away?" she repeated.

"Yes, m'am. He's been gone two months now."

She obtained his new address, looked up its number in the telephone directory, and called that.

A servant answered.

"Is Mr Kirkpatrick there?" asked Edith.

"Yes, m'am; but I think he's at luncheon."

"Will you ask him to come to the 'phone, please? I won't keep him a minute. I just want to know if it would be convenient for him to see me this afternoon on a matter of business."

"Yes, m'am. What name, please?"

Koviloor Acadamy

Edith pondered. If she said "Mrs Vanaman," Kirkpatrick might not know who she was; if she said "Mrs Trent," she would probably be saying it to a man who was aware of Jim's remarriage.

"What name?" the servant asked for the second time.

"Edith Trent," said Edith.

"All right, Miss Trent. Hold the wire, please."

She waited for a longer time than she considered necessary. When the telephone spoke to her again she was becoming annoyed at Kirkpatrick and losing the caution with which she generally conducted conversations by wire.

"Hello?"

"Oh, is that you, Tommy?" she said. "What on earth——"

"No, this is not Mr Kirkpatrick," said the telephone. She had forgotten Kirkpatrick's voice along with the rest of him, and only now, when it was too late, she recognised this as the voice of the servant who had previously been speaking to her —a voice different from what it had been because it was less polite. "Mr Kirkpatrick says he is very sorry, but you must excuse him from seeing you: he says to tell you he is lunching with Mrs Kirkpatrick and will be indefinitely engaged."

The servant rang off, and left Edith to her mortification.

Tommy was married, then! His mother was dead; he had no brother, no male relatives of his own name: he had often told her so. "Mrs Kirkpatrick" could mean only one thing —and this was his gratitude; this was his way of informing her of his marriage and of saying that he would have nothing more to do with her.

She would not be beaten yet; she would swallow her anger and try elsewhere. She would not risk being put off by telephone; she would see George Mertcheson in person.

Mertcheson was the head of the publicity department in one of the public service corporations. Edith went to his office on a high floor in a lower Broadway skyscraper and, refusing to send in her name, said that she wanted to see him on business. In most offices her name would have been insisted upon, but she knew George to be a man of easy habits, and she was not disappointed; she was shown into the inner office, where he sat alone.

For an instant he did not recognise her, and this was a shock. Then, as she drew nearer, his sallow face changed its expression from one of polite curiosity to one of pity not unmixed with embarrassment. Nevertheless, he got up from his

Koviloor Acadamy
desk and came forward, his hand outstretched : a loose-jointed figure of a man.

"Hello!" he said. "Glad to see you. Where did you drop from?"

He had pretty eyes of blue, but his black hair was too straight, and there was a wart on his nose; his head, which started well, ended abruptly in a pointed, insignificant chin, as if the modeller had grown tired of the work; the too prominent ears the modeller had left quite unfinished. Mertcheson's eyelids rose and fell with a nervous rapidity reminiscent of Aunt Hattie's, and his tone belied his assertion of pleasure at seeing her.

Edith came directly to the point.

"I've been divorced and I'm remarried," she said, "and my husband's in business, and I want to tell you about it."

His face gave her no indication of how much of what she said was news to him. He told her to sit down, and he sat down again at his desk and listened to her : the man that had sworn he would love her for ever.

Edith did know a good deal about the receiver. She talked for half-an-hour. Sometimes she thought he was paying more attention to what she was than what she said, but this did not disconcert her, because she knew that an interest in her person would help her project, if that interest were not pressed too far, and because, having noted on her entrance his recognition of the alteration in her, she humanly wanted his attitude to be an admission that, if she had changed, she had not changed entirely for the worse. What she did not count on was what happened : the personal interest was pressed forward to the exclusion of all other interests. When she opened one of the pamphlets to illustrate from its diagrams a point that she was making, Mertcheson took her hand and squeezed it.

"You mustn't do that!" she said, sharply.

His blue eyes met her brown eyes. She did not want to lose her chance, but he meant her to understand one thing, and she could not misunderstand it. This Mertcheson, who had once declared he would do for her anything she might ask, would help her, now she was cornered, on only one condition.

"Why not?" he asked. He kept her hand and smiled at her knowingly.

"I told you I was married."

"Well, weren't you married when I knew you before?"

She snatched her hand away and left him. She did not once look back at him.

Koviloor Acadamy
By half-past four o'clock, she had learned that her other chance was gone, too. Edith, who feared and hated death, was told that Billy Namyna was dead and buried, that those arms which had embraced her——

§ 2. She found herself within walking distance of Charley's office. She remembered how he had urged her to visit it and how she had declined to go there, saying that she had too much to do at home, yet inwardly fearing to find some overt signs of failure. Now, on the sudden impulse to seek from the man she loved refuge in the hour of defeat, she decided to call at the place. She would get Charley and take him home with her.

She went in the elevator to the highest floor, and searched until she found an inconspicuous door conspicuously labelled :

THE VANAMAN RADIO RECEIVER

Edith turned the brass door-knob and entered.

It was a very small room, the walls of which were hung with blueprints and diagrams. Hard by the single window stood Charley's roll-top desk, closed. In the centre of the room was a long table, upon which, amid a pile of disordered papers, stood a telegraphic instrument enhanced by a Vanaman Receiver. Close to the door, under the electric light, a man, a caller strange to Edith, was lounging beside a typewriter-table at which, her fingers idly toying with the keys of the writing-machine, sat the girl that must, the wife surmised, be Miss Girodet, Charley's stenographer.

She was a girl of a sort so rare in New York as to be worth any man's second glance. In the Bordeaux country, and especially in Bordeaux itself, her kind is the rule, but it is a kind that seldom emigrates. She was short and robust, trimly corseted, yet generously developed. Her dark dress was cut low at the base of the neck and displayed a throat that seemed made of warm ivory. Her mouth was full, a vivid red, and her round cheeks were pink; but the rest of her face was marvellously white : a white soft and firm and like the white of her throat, all splendid in its contrast to her thick, low-combed, jet-black hair.

Edith felt an uncomfortable emotion.

"Mr Vanaman?" she inquired, for the stenographer had not troubled to look up at her entrance.

Koviloor Acadamy

"Out," said the girl, and went on talking to the caller, who, it seemed to Edith, must have come to meet not Charley but the girl.

"When will he be back?" persisted Edith.

The girl glanced apologetically at her caller and turned a bored face, for the merest moment, toward her questioner.

"I don't know. He's never certain."

"Soon?"

"Perhaps in fifteen minutes; perhaps not for half-an-hour."

"Very well," said Edith; "I think I'll wait."

She sat down beside the table and tried to look at the model. Soon, however, she found her glance wandering back again and again toward the softly chattering and laughing stenographer, of whose conversation she was unable to catch any save the most casual words.

The man at last turned away. Stunned by the results of her afternoon's endeavours, Edith, who generally had an appraising eye for men, had noted nothing of this one except that he was tall and slim—rather of Jim's build, she scornfully thought—and that he had a dark face. But now, as he left the room, the wife got her best look at the girl. The stenographer was gazing intently at the man, and her eyes, under sombre brows and long, curling lashes, were big and soft and black; they were the melting eyes that melt hearts, and they looked at the departing caller with a meaning that Edith, out of her own experience and her fresh memory of Mertcheson's advances, found it impossible to misconstrue.

When the caller had gone, the stenographer, without a word to Edith, began to clatter at the typewriter. Charley's wife sat in silence until, ten minutes later, Charley himself appeared: he looked tired and harassed, but his eyes were shining as Edith knew they always shone immediately after he had taken a drink.

"Hello!" he said to the typist as he entered; and then, seeing Edith, "Hello!" he said in another but no less easy tone. "This *is* good! How long have you been here?"

"A half hour," said Edith. Her tone was cool. She had seen something that she distinctly disliked: when Charley came in, his stenographer looked at him precisely as she had looked at the man that had left a short time before. It did not count with Edith that Charley did not return the glance: no doubt he saw his wife in time to prevent that. "Are you leaving soon?" she added.

Koviloor Acadamy
"Right away," said Charley. "But don't you want me to show you the office first?"

"No, thanks. I've had plenty of time to see it—while I was waiting for you."

The stenographer had risen and was pinning on her hat, her hands raised above her head. Hers was a large black hat and becoming.

"Mr Tyrrell was here, Mr Vanaman," she said. —"Mr Tyrrell, of Boston."

"Eh? Oh, that's too bad!" Charley was obviously disappointed. "Missed him—and his first visit to the office, too. Did he say he'd come again?"

"He said he might call again to-morrow."

Edith's voice interrupted this exchange of business details.

"I think he will be sure to come back," said she, dryly.

Vanaman looked puzzled. "You met him?"

"No. I only gathered it from his manner."

The stenographer smartly closed her desk:

"Anything more, Mr Vanaman?"

"No, thank you, Miss Girodet," the employer answered. He went to the door and held it open for her as she went out. "A nice girl, that," he added as he closed the door upon her exit.

Edith was regarding him with stern eyes. Her lips were set, and she tapped the floor with the toe of her right boot.

"So your business friend that was here seemed to think," said she.

"What—Tyrrell?" Charley chuckled. His chuckle was hoarse: it grated on her nerves. "Well, any bait's good bait if it catches the fish." He noticed the cloud on his wife's face. "She's a good worker, too," he said.

"She appeared to be working Mr Tyrrell," replied Edith, "and she is quite ready to work you."

Charley blushed. It was a blush of honest denial of all guilt, a blush, moreover, of fear of his accuser's anger; but it was also the blush of a man that is flattered. Edith recognised only this last significance.

"Nonsense," said Charley.

"Who is she?" demanded Edith.

"You heard: Miss Girodet, my stenographer. You know well enough. I've told you about her lots of times."

"You never told me she was like this."

"Like what?"

"Well, you never told me what she looked like. You——"

Koviloor Acadamy
"Now, just a moment, please. Don't go so fast, Edith." Charley was manœuvreing for delay. "What does it matter what she looks like, as long as she's cheap and does her work well?"

Edith was not concerned with the economic aspects of Miss Girodet's case:

"She's French, I suppose?"

"Her parents were. Good heavens, Edith, you've heard me speak of her often enough!"

"Yes, very often indeed, now I come to think of it. Too often." Edith's breast rose and fell heavily. "But you never happened to mention that you thought her a beauty—I know now why you wouldn't discharge her."

Charley saw trouble rolling nearer and tried to avoid it by a lie. "I don't think she's a beauty."

"You do!" Edith's voice lifted to an exasperating sharpness, and her lips parted in a smile that showed her teeth. "Why can't you tell the truth for once?"

"My dear," said Charley, trying to put a heavy, quieting hand on the shoulder that was quickly drawn away, "when have I ever lied to you?"

"Lied!" Edith's anger burst. "Do you think I believe all your Chinese stories and haven't I known you to lie under oath? Her cheeks are painted, and so are her lips. Anybody who wasn't a fool could see that. I know you. I see you now. I might have known it from the way we started—the way you started with *me*." She considered her own case. She was not pretty when she was angry, and, now that she broke into sobs of self-pity, she was almost ugly; but her utter disregard of the consequences of the noise she made, her carelessness to what her husband's business-neighbours passing in the hall outside might think, had a terrifying sublimity. "I'm at home washing dishes and mending clothes all day, and you're down here flirting with a painted French girl!"

So she suspected his tales of Asiatic adventure! He was long to remember that, though it hurt him too much for him to recall it to her. And she was thinking of their testimony in the divorce suit, not as she had thought of it for months past, but as so many lies. This, too, he dared not dwell upon. It was bad enough to have her accuse him of infidelity as she had accused her former husband. Charley was wounded, but he was even more afraid of what might follow. He scarcely knew what he said, but what he said was:

Koviloor Acadamy

"Dearie, dearie, please don't talk so loud. She's not painted: it's only the regular rouge."

"How did you find that out?"

"Oh, I didn't mean—— Edith, please! Somebody will be sure to hear you."

"I don't care *who* hears me!" Torn by the long strain of the past months, the recent news of Jim's latest success and the failure of her afternoon, she completely abandoned herself. Her voice rose to a shriek. "A French girl!" she cried, as if the specified nationality were itself an evidence of infamy.

"Edith!"

"I won't stop. You needn't try to stop me. And don't think she cares anything about *you!* She'd make eyes at any man. She does make them at every man. You're her boss, that's all. But you're such a soft thing that any girl can fool you if she's made up enough and smiles at you. You're just like Jim!"

At the mention of that name which was in the minds of both, a purple anger surged into Charley's face. He leaped forward and put his hand over her shouting mouth.

"Shut up!" he commanded. "Shut up, or I'll do something that Jim never had the nerve to do!"

She struggled in his arms. She fought him, but he held her cruelly tight. Then, suddenly, she lay still. She had fainted.

This presented a new and mightier terror. Charley found himself standing rigid, helpless, wondering if she were dead, and, if so, what, at the inquest, witnesses could say of the noise of that quarrel. He shook himself together, loosened her dress, and fanned her face and kissed her. He begged her to open her eyes, and, as he kissed her, all his love for her returned.

"Come back!" he whispered in her ear. "Come back to me, dearie! Edith, can't you hear? Won't you hear me? What you thought wasn't true; but if you'll only believe me, I'll do anything—anything you ask." (It was what George Mertcheson had once said to her.)—"I love you, Edith!" cried Charley. "I love you! I love you!"

Slowly she opened the brown stars that were her eyes.

"Will you—will you fire that girl?" she asked.

Her husband nodded.

"Yes," he said.

She clutched his hand.

Koviloor Acadamy

TWELFTH CHAPTER

HUSBAND and wife patched up their quarrel, and for some time this patch wore as well as most. They began their stitching without fully knowing what they were doing; they continued it because that was the easiest thing to do. Nevertheless, the very presence of a patch is a perpetual reminder of the rent it covers, and the robe of Charley's and Edith's domestic relations had already many patches.

Charley felt that he had been grievously injured by unjust suspicion, and he was sorely offended by Edith's likening him to Jim; even his pet past was doubted. Edith, who had once said that she might have respected her first husband had he ever struck her, found it difficult to tolerate Charley's threat of physical violence. The man, if he could not wholly forget, at least tried to forgive; the woman, though she did not acknowledge her suspicions unfounded— it was not her custom to utter such awkward admissions—made an honest effort to put the stenographer out of her thoughts as Charley put her out of his office: Edith blamed Jim for placing her in the frame of mind that made her distrust all men. Thus it at first appeared that nobody suffered except Jim, ever present in the background of their consciousness; but the patch looked fresh, remained fresh.

Edith figured the situation in martial rather than sartorial terms. She called it a truce, and the truce, at least on her side, could not long continue. A time arrived when she violated its implicit terms. The violation began timidly, through the roundabout ways of excuse, of self-justification and righteous anger elaborately prepared, but it inevitably occurred.

What she thought was: "Since Charley has been false to his friendship with Jim, why should he not be false to his love for me?" The poverty of the past Winter months, the attitude of deceit toward the world, the quarrels, the loss of friends, the elder Vanaman's tenacious grip upon his slender thread of life, Charley's certain drunkenness, his possible lying about his adventurous past, the halt of the invention, the failure of

Koviloor Acadamy
her attempts to secure money for it, the unrelieved hopelessness of the entire situation—these things pushed her forward.

She told herself that she had been a thorough-going Puritan—and without reward. The hunger for friendship and a modicum of gaiety, a hunger that had increased through those starved days, she could no longer refuse. She had done her best to help, but she was impotent; and in every corner café New York danced. The memory of that picture of the tango dancers remained with her as a symbol of everything she was missing, as something that continually inquired of her whether she was not to snatch a little joy before the final crash of Charley's fortunes which could not much longer be postponed. It did not seem to her a trival matter, this dancing: it seemed to her the only means of relief, of meeting new people and new thoughts that would not associate themselves in her mind with those conditions which she must now from time to time forget if she would she escape madness: the only means to a few and rare moments of forgetfulness. Once she remembered that Jim had allowed her to take riding lessons, of no use to her now, and reflected that he would have been equally free in allowing her to brush up her dancing; but such permissions, of course, came from his lack of interest in her pursuits; they furnished no ground for comparison with Charley. He, in any case, would never consent to the instruction; about that he had gone on record. There was but one way to win him: she must proceed secretly, surprise him with her refurbished talent, and then trust to the accomplished fact.

She admitted that she had never been a "wonderful" dancer; but she knew the old steps. All she needed was to dust a knowledge grimy from lack of exercise; all *he* needed was . . . well, it was a good deal, when she came to think of it. Still, dancing hadn't changed radically in the past few months. Charley was certainly awkward, but she could bring him up-to-date, once arrived there herself. His objection? She could not believe its indicated basis genuine: one indecency shouldn't spoil the pleasure of thousands. He was fundamentally timid, and timidity made for envy: it would be necessary merely to give him what he feared he could never acquire.

Anyhow, she wasn't going on denying herself. . . .

Edith would, of course, have preferred to take private lessons, but these the money at her disposal would not permit, so she searched the advertising columns of the newspapers, in

Kovilpor Academy
which new schools of dancing grew faster than nasturtiums, and selected a list of what she thought were the newest, smallest, and cheapest. None, it appeared upon investigation, were old, few had small classes, and all were, from her present point of view, expensive.

"Of course we're not an old institution," the dapper proprietor of one establishment enlightened her, "because we specialise in nothing except the very newest steps; but the very fact that we're new and up-to-date brings the crowd. Everybody's crazy to learn, and so our smallest class is rather large. Our price is 'way below the average, but the people that want to keep up with the times are always willing to pay for it."

The Spring was still warm in Edith's blood. At the fourth place of inquiry she committed herself to a series of afternoon lessons.

§ 2. The "school" was high in a West Forty-fifth Street building full of theatrical agents' offices, the visitors to which filled the elevator with the scent of essences and chewing-gum. The hall was not large, and its ceiling was low. Along the walls were ranged rows of folding chairs. At one end an expressionless woman sat at a piano. On the polished floor were two or three groups of serious people of both sexes and every age, each group in charge of a deputy-instructor. The chief instructor, the thinnest man Edith had ever seen, darted from one of these groups to another, clapping his hands to mark time or arrest attention, his coat-tails flying, his eyes intense. Now he would illustrate a "step" alone; now with his chief lieutenant, a blonde girl as thin as himself; again he would swoop on a couple of dancing pupils, pull them apart and correct some of their errors by assuming the masculine or feminine rôle, as the case required, and whirling through it with the lesser offender. The expressionless woman at the piano followed him with stony eyes, began playing at his command, without expresssion, but with abnormal accentuation of time, and stopped, again at his command, in the middle of a bar.

"Glad to see you," said the thin man, when Edith had made known her errand to him. "And you want to start right away?"

Edith looked at the other pupils. She suddenly wanted to begin among beginners.

Kovilpor Acadamy
The thin man interpreted her gaze.

"Oh, don't mind them," he said. "They won't mind *you* a little bit. Come on, now." He stood before her, his hands on his narrow hips, and spoke in the most businesslike tone. She knew this? She knew that? Well, then! "The first thing to remember is you don't dance with your head. And the next thing is just to get into the rhythm, let yourself go, and follow my lead. Give me your hand. That's it. Miss Gilroy."

Miss Gilroy was evidently the pianist, and the mention of her name was audibly a command for the music to continue. The music did continue, and Edith's first lesson began.

Compared with Edith, the other pupils were experts. She had learned the old-fashioned dances at Ayton in a class of which the members were all young, as she had been, all raw novices and all her friends; she had picked up their successors as best she could when they appeared. This was another affair altogether, and at first she was awkward from sheer embarrassment; but she had not taken a dozen steps before a glance at her present companions assured her that the thin man was right: these other pupils were too seriously bent upon perfecting their art to have any eyes for her. In the words of one of the songs that had led the vanguard of the "modern" dances when, long ago, they were new, everybody was "doin' it" and doin' it doggedly for himself and his momentary partner alone.

The teacher had put out his arms, and Edith stepped into them.

"Now," said the teacher. "Just let yourself go with me. *Um-tum-te-um-tum, um-tum, um-tum.* Legs apart. Keep your knees close to mine."

She went red, but she obeyed.

"That's it; that's it. So. There you are. *Um-tum-te*—— No, no! From your hips; from your hips only. Sure, you must remember *that* much! Miss Gilroy. Most teachers prefer the machine-music, but I——"

The sufficiently mechanical music stopped. So did the other dancers. The thin man repeated his instructions in a voice for all the room to hear; but Edith, though ashamed for the mistake she had made, saw that the pupils' attention was for him and not for her. He performed the step alone.

"This way—and *don't* move your shoulders! Now, try again. Hold tight. Miss Gilroy."

Koviloor Acadamy

Edith stepped on the instructor's feet, but he smiled and kept on. "Don't get rattled," he said. "*Um-tum-te-um-tum, um-tum, um-tum. . . .*"

The afternoons of two weeks, reinforced by solitary home-practice on her aching legs; she required no more:

"You'll never make a professional," the teacher told her; "but, with a good partner, you'll be a first-rate parlour-performer."

Edith left the hall that last afternoon with a new glow in her heart. During the past fourteen days she had been recapturing joy, and joy recaptured brightened her eyes, coloured her cheeks, did for a time what the Spring promised and failed to do: made her young again. Even Charley saw it and, in his clumsy way, said so. But she decided that it was not yet time to tell him the secret.

§ 3. As she came away from her last lesson, she tried to set her mind to a consideration of things as they were with her. The moment presented itself as decisive.

She had again made friends with gladness. What her lessons did for her was not merely negative. They not only shut her mind, while they were in progress, against the memory of her disappointments and the desperation of her husband's affairs; they opened another door, the door beyond which she had always wanted to pass, the door to light and music and freedom from care, to the fairy elements that composed what she considered Success. They sharpened her longing, gave her a glimpse, pointed a way.

Nevertheless, they were expensive. They were expensive emotionally, though that she but dimly apprehended; and they were expensive in material dollars and cents, and of this she was now desperately aware. "The people that want to keep up with the times," the dapper proprietor had told her, "are willing to pay for it": Edith had spent the last penny of her savings. The tuition-fees took much. Then it was evident that a special kind of skirt was needed for the execution of the new dances and, next, a special kind of *ceintures* and shoes. The makers of these luxuries were trading on the tango craze as sharply as the dancing-masters, were asking those prices which people that wanted to keep up with the times were willing to pay: Edith, rashly defying experience with the hope of some good luck coming to the Vanaman Receiver, had appropriated for skirt and *ceintures* and shoes

Koviloor Acadamy
money that Charley gave her for the room-rent, and the landlady was again ominous.

Charley's business-position was rapidly becoming untenable. She knew, because of his very silence concerning it, that he had again sunk into debt, that the office-rent was in much the condition in which the room-rent was, that printers and other creditors were pressing him, and that Mame had no more money to lend. These things reacted on his habits, his physique, his temper: he was drinking harder than ever; his face was fat and grey and haggard; he seemed to burrow into her words, even into her gestures, for grievances, and he would brew red rages that shot from his mouth in flames of burning accusation and reproach.

Her position was almost worse because of that touch of contrast which the dancing-lessons supplied. From dully hopeless it had become acutely intolerable. On the one hand, the door to gladness was opened enough to tantalize her by the sight and sound of what lay beyond it, yet too little to permit her passage through; from the other advanced implacable danger and—yes, she at last thus confessed its nature—irretrievable failure.

Unwilling to return at once to the scene of what must so soon be this disaster, she had walked east along Forty-fifth Street. She turned south on Fifth Avenue.

The shop windows were full of those beautiful things which she loved, which she had once been certain of possessing, which she now realised she could never obtain: they were ornaments that she would have ornamented, clothes that she would have worn so much better than the women who could afford them. Thousands of women could afford them, but Edith never could. They beckoned to her and smiled at her, these beautiful things. Pretending to scorn the mention of mere money, and designed for customers to whom money mattered everything in bulk and nothing in detail, they were displayed—gowns and rings, brooches and opera-cloaks, hats and tiaras, embroidered stockings and delicate anklets, weblike lingerie, jewelled slippers, massive bracelets, necklaces of diamonds, ropes of pearls—without the vulgarity of a price-mark that, if it told the truth, would tell a price which the merchants were ashamed to advertise. Persons—some quite commonplace-looking persons—saw them and, innocent of a second's hesitation, went into the shops to buy. Close at hand these treasures lay, but far beyond Edith's reach; they hung

Koviloor Acadamy
from metal rods, shone on mockingly superior wax figures, sparkled out of cushions of pale yellow and royal purple behind a scant quarter-inch of plate-glass window; yet from Charley Vanaman's wife they were as far away as the glittering planets are from the astronomer when he studies them through the lens of his telescope.

It was half-past four o'clock in the afternoon, and the Avenue was filled with those fortunate of New York's women who want everything and have everything, who cannot count the cost of what they desire and do not have to count it. They passed in freshly varnished motor cars, directed by liveried chauffeurs; they brushed Edith on the sidewalk; they wore pumps and silk stockings, yet were dressed in furs too heavy for the Spring weather and too expensive for the daughters of feudal overlords. All of them were chattering, all of them were laughing, all of them were ignorant of what it was to be stalked by debt or balked by prices. Here and there, easy, gallantly attentive to the happy girl beside him, gracefully mannered with the instinctive social rectitude of the person born to the world of leisure, appeared a man, slim, correct, his clothes made for him and not he for his clothes, the male complement to the woman of Fifth Avenue at four-thirty, a creature of a species that Charley might occasionally say one word of business to in a month, but never approach any nearer. There was among them all, women and men, the freemasonry of extravagant wealth: friend waved muff or raised hat to friend, called across the curb from limousine to pavement some polite question about last night's dance or some invitation to to-morrow's opera. Even those who were not personally known to one another had signs of mutual understanding, tacit recognitions and acceptances.

In the throng of them the few less fortunate were swallowed up; the envious mimicked; the total impression was an impression of complete well-being. Edith read her newspapers and her scandalmongering weekly magazines, those blackmailing social-scavengers which exact tribute from the weaker rich who fear publicity, depending for their circulation upon the Edith Vanamans of New York: she knew many of the passersby—the society women, the actresses, the millionaires—from printed pictures and descriptions, and she knew, from her reading, the daily life of all.

They had wakened late and slowly in quiet bedrooms. Capped and aproned servants had brought coffee and rolls or

Koviloor Academy
toast and tea to their bedsides. They had stepped into baths of a prescribed temperature. They had ridden good horses in Central Park. They had come home to be dressed by maids or valets in clothes selected from rooms resembling these shop windows. They had motored here to luncheon, there to tea. Now they took exercise along Fifth Avenue as familiarly as they would soon be playing tennis on the lawns of their own summer places at Newport or Bar Harbour.

Fifth Avenue belonged to them, because they could afford it. Soon the shining asphalt of it would be entirely hidden by the long line of their cars: rich women going home to dinner from unhampered shopping, rich men going home to dinner from the club or from huge financial manipulations that they performed as men play cards to whom the stakes are insignificant. Then the motors would reappear to join the theatre-procession along Broadway, and Broadway, when the theatre curtains rose, would become as quiet as the main street in Ayton on a mid-week evening, only to change, as the curtains fell, into a blazing canyon's river-bed too narrow for the noisy flood poured into it. The suppers, the drinking, the tango would begin. . . .

And Edith Vanaman would be sitting in a sordid room in Greenwich Village, with the elevated railway trains screaming close to her window, watching her shabby husband drink and listening to him brag about what he would do when his luck changed and what he had done in a country that she wondered if he had ever visited.

§ 4. At Forty-second Street she turned westward, meaning to take a Seventh Avenue car home; but she walked slowly: the feet that had been dancing were loath to drag her toward her dingy lodgings, and her mind, busy with the pictures of what she had left and what she was going to, directed her steps languidly. More than one passerby turned to look after her, for the sparks of her recaptured joy still shone out of the brown eyes and brightened the round cheeks behind which the old despair was rising; yet she was so preoccupied that, within two hundred yards of Broadway, she avoided a man coming toward her only to bump sharply into another man going in her own direction.

"I beg your pardon," said Edith.

She scarcely looked at her victim, but received the impression that he belonged in the crowd that she had seen on

Koviloor Acadamy

Fifth Avenue. Because her envy of that crowd was so sharp, she was not disposed to look at him a second time.

Her victim, however, for a half-minute seemed to consider himself the aggressor. He stopped, pulled at his little black moustache, raised his hat, and rapidly began a full apology.

"Oh," he interrupted himself in the midst of it—"and it's Mrs Vanaman. I *am* so sorry."

She knew him now: he was the man she had seen in Charley's office in subdued talk with Miss Girondet. Edith despised him for that intimacy with a stenographer, perhaps the more because it was carried on when a better sort of woman was within speaking-distance; but it struck her that she must be careful not to show him her feelings, because Charley had told her that this Mr Tyrrell was a rich young Bostonian who evinced an interest in the invention and might be persuaded to invest in it.

"Yes," she said. "But you didn't hurt me."

"Are you sure?" he pressed her. His voice was the voice of cultivation, and his tone genuinely solicitous. "I was very awkward. And I hope you'll forgive me for knowing your name. I saw you in your husband's office one day, and, the next time I went there, I dared to make inquiries."

She had thought him like Jim, but now she saw that, physically, there was no real resemblance. What points of likeness there might be were negligible, and only an ease of manner and readiness of phrase were so sufficiently dissimilar from Vanaman and so sufficiently similar to his predecessor as to insist at all upon a comparison. Tyrrell was younger than either Jim or Charley, but his dark hair was touched with a premature grey and his face was the self-possessed face of a man of means that is also a man of the world. It was a stern, strong, dignified face with piercing eyes and a firm mouth, and yet it gave her the feeling that the man's strength, since he had inherited more money than he could use, was devoted to procuring enjoyment. He was pale and lean and dressed with a quietness that Edith recognised as expensive. He had a pleasant smile that showed his lips, when relaxed, to be full, and his grey gaze was provocative as well as piercing. Edith knew at a glance that he belonged on the bright side of the door forbidden to her. She had to admit that he was handsome; she felt at once the lure that the light has for all those who are in the shadow, felt it quick and keen; but she resolutely set her mind to wondering what such a man could have

Koviloor Acadamy
discovered to attract him in the stenographer that her husband had since summarily dismissed. She had a sense that she must keep a firm grasp on the sword of her displeasure because, against the attacks of an adversary of this sort, the shield of her resistance was frail.

"I'm quite sure I wasn't hurt," she said.

"Then you won't hold it against me?" he smiled.

"I won't bump against you, if that's what you mean," she put it.

The blow went home. His smile broadened to a frank laugh.

"Well," he said, "I'll confess—if there's any virtue in a thief's confession when he is caught with the stolen property in his waistcoat pocket. I saw you and recognised you. I've been wanting for some days to apologise to you for—for something that seemed to me to require an apology; and so, when I saw you strike that chap and carom in my direction, I—well, I rather put myself in your way."

Edith felt the weight of her buckler: "Is that your way of getting a chance to apologise?"

"Oh, for a good deed," he expostulated, "any way is a good way."

"Then," she struck again, "suppose you tell me what you want to apologise for, and then suppose you apologise." She remembered that this ingratiating young man, whom she still wanted to mistrust, might save the receiver's fortunes; she remembered it just in time to refrain from concluding: "And then suppose you let me go on *my* way home."

If the young man guessed the suppression—and there was a twinkle in his eyes that made her suspect that he guessed it—he did not permit it to disturb him. He took quite the opposite course. He said:

"It's a long story."

"If that's so," said Edith, "perhaps Forty-second Street isn't the place to tell it, after all." She made as if to move on.

Tyrrell patently chose to misunderstand her:

"You take the words out of my mouth. You quite charmingly relieve me of the embarrassment of asking it. Honestly, I'm grateful."

He puzzled her. Curiosity overcame caution, as only curiosity so splendidly can.

"You mean I relieve you of the embarrassment of asking my pardon—of making your apology for I don't know what?"

Koviloor Acadamy

"No; on the contrary: of asking you to let me make it in a fitter place. You give me hope of ultimate mercy. I was beating my poor brains to think of a way to induce you to let me select a quieter scene. I need courage to ask mercy; I'm dying for a harmless stimulant, and I'm a bad enough American to like the English beverage at five o'clock. What do you say to the first-at-hand and eminently respectable tea-room of the Delevingne?"

What she would have said to it was, "No"; but Tyrrell saw that, too, and added:

"Everybody goes there, you know. They say they go to drink tea, but when they get there they all dance."

He was opening a little wider the door that she had thought she could not pass, the door through which she could escape the failure that approached outside of it. He was asking her to go to a *thé-dansant:* she had not been to one since she left Jim. Moreover, Tyrrell was asking it as if it were quite a matter of course—as if he assumed that she was the kind of person that his own sister must be. Well, why not? After all, it was not as if he were not of her husband's acquaintance; somehow or other Charley had managed to meet this man. In Ayton, when a stranger scraped acquaintance with you on the street, you named it being "picked up," and pretended to your friends that there had been a formal presentation; but Tyrrell was quite aware of her identity, even had what he might well feel to be an excellent reason for talking to her. If he thought he had been rude, that day at the office, it was no more than she had thought he was: she owed him the chance for an apology and, as she had truthfully herself remarked, the pavement of Forty-second Street was no place for the granting of such opportunities. The Hotel Delevingne, which he moderately called respectable was more than respectable; Ayton would have described it as "select." It had but lately been opened; it was popular; she wanted to see it! To go could involve no disloyalty to Charley: it might be the means toward helping Charley that, a few days ago, she had so eagerly sought and so wildly regretted losing. Were she pleasant to the man of wealth, the man of wealth would be the more disposed to look kindly on Charley's invention. The *thé-dansant*——

Edith's buckler clattered to the pavement. Forty-second Street, on which so many similar shields have fallen, was too full of other noises to heed its clatter.

Koviloor Academy
"Yes," she said, breathlessly—she could not say, "Thank you"—"I will go."

They had to push their way through the great lobby. There was a woman on every chair, and men and women stood shoulder to shoulder from wall to wall.

"Is there anything going on?" asked Edith.

"There's dancing going on," he laughed over his shoulder at her, as he ploughed the road; "and it goes on every afternoon in every week."

They reached a high-vaulted room decorated in gilt and crimson. About it were many and small gilded tables; to each table there were drawn more gilded chairs than could comfortably be placed there, and not one of them was unoccupied. In the crowded space between the rows of tables, a hundred or more couples were dancing to the music of an orchestra that the demands of the dancers had propelled from view. The women were bright with those daring colours, more daringly combined, which the fashion of the day exacted, but the men tangoed in the rumpled sack suits in which they had hurried here from their offices as soon as they could decently leave their work. They balanced and sea-sawed, slid and ambled, without a care of what the spectators said or thought.

"We shall have to wait our chance," said Tyrrell, looking over the tables. "Do you mind?"

They were standing in the doorway, and already other anxious guests were thick behind them. That Tyrrell did not mind was evident enough. Edith, her eyes bright upon the scene, confessed that she did not.

"What a good time they're having!" she said.

"They're doing the only thing that anybody now really cares about," Tyrrell assured her. "Life's becoming nothing but dancing, and resting from dancing, so as to be able to dance again. Don't you think so? At five o'clock, in the days when I was young, your tired business-man used to be six-deep at the bars all along Broadway—and now look at him."

Immediately in front of her, passed a couple of dancers that might well have been the models for Jim's picture. Edith said to herself that perhaps Jim had come to this very place for his inspiration—Jim, courted, lucky, successful. Well, she could come here, too. . . .

"But I needn't praise dancing to you," Tyrrell was saying. "You love it."

She gave him her grateful eyes:

Kovilpur Academy
"How do you know that?"

He had assumed it because he had assumed that the remark would apply to any idle woman, but he saw that what he had said pleased this one.

"I've only to look at you," he replied, "to see that you love it. And, if you love to dance, you dance well. Will you let me see if I'm at all your match?"

"Oh, no, thank you," she said quickly, she could not have told why; "I don't think I came to dance. Weren't you going to apologise to me?"

The crowd behind them pressed them together. The blare of the music made them bend their heads close to each other.

"What?" said Tyrrell. "Before I've had the tea to raise my courage?"

"You needn't do it till you've had your tea, but meantime you might tell me what it's all about."

"It's all about you," he beautifully explained.

She thoroughly knew what he wanted to apologise for, but it suited her to make the way arduous:

"I haven't the least idea what you're trying to say."

"Then do suppose we dance it."

"No, really."

"You're not afraid?"

"You mean afraid to dance? But *you're* afraid to talk."

"A dance might do in place of the tea."

She shook her head. "It must be something quite terrible."

"Just one dance?" he pleaded.

"Not three steps," she resolved. It was really very pleasant to have a man of this sort asking favours of her, and the music was insistent. Before she knew what she was adding, she had added: "Until you've told me."

"Oh, *then!*" he smiled. He seemed to be making a momentous decision. "It was for being rude to you that day at your husband's office."

She had hoped he would say this. She had seen an advantage in that form of statement. She reached for the advantage:

"What day?"

With a frank laugh, he dashed it from her:

"Why, that's saying you didn't see me there, and if you didn't see me there, Mrs Vanaman, you would have been letting me speak to you just now without the least idea of who I was." She flushed, and he read the meaning of her flush.

Koviloor Acadamy
"Come," he said: "I'm the sinner and I mustn't forget it. Don't let me forget my place, Mrs Vanaman: your husband never lets me. But he manages that by being so appallingly honest. Of course you saw me, but of course you didn't want to own to seeing any such atrocious person."

"Perhaps that was it," said Edith, who knew that he was trying to help her.

"You saw me," he went on, "and you naturally wanted to know how it was that your husband had such outrageous acquaintances, and so, when I'd gone, you asked the stenographer——"

"Not at all!"

"Well, then, it was your husband that you asked who I was."

"I didn't ask anybody. When Charley came in, the stenographer told him you'd called."

Tyrrell became more serious. "At any rate, I didn't want you to think that I had any idea at that time that you were yourself, you know. And I don't want you to think now that my attentions to the charming young person were of any but a business nature."

Edith had it on her tongue to inquire what sort of business they were; but she substituted another question:

"If you hadn't any idea who I was, when did you find out?"

"Later," said Tyrrell.

"And where?"

"I did what I accused you of doing: I asked Miss Girodet."

Edith shrugged her shoulders:

"You see Miss Girodet often?"

"I have seen her once since, and by chance."

"And you asked"—she had an advantage at last and would not release it—"you asked my husband's stenographer who I was?"

"Yes. You see, I wanted to find out in order to apologise, or at least to explain. 'Explain' is the better word, isn't it, please?" As she was about to answer, he continued: "And, besides, she tells me she's not your husband's stenographer any longer. I do hope that what you saw didn't make you have Mr Vanaman get rid of her."

Again he had the better. Edith's denial was a shade too ready.

Koviloor Acadamy

"I'm glad of that," said Tyrrell; "because she's really quite all right, you know."

"Did she," Edith could not refrain from asking, "tell you that, too, when you met her once and by chance?"

"It wasn't necessary, Mrs Vanaman. My eyes told me and my ears. And the chance that I met her by was a collision that I had with her yesterday on this highly respectable dancing-floor."

How much of what he said in this foreign fashion did he say from a sort of friendly malice? She was sure, now, that it must be friendly, but equally that it must be malice. The question was one of quantity alone. Talking to Tyrrell was like playing a game. It was happy children—she recklessly granted the adjective—romping about an empty house. He would invite her to pursue him into a room from which there was no exit save the door of entrance. Sure that she could here at last trap him, she would follow and fling herself far into that room, only to find that he had flattened himself against the wall in which the door was cut: before she could turn on him, he would have turned, darted out, shut the door on her, and be galloping down a distant passage. Yes, it was a game—a game that she had played and liked once or twice before, a long time since, when she had briefly met a few of the friends of Jean Dunbar.

"So that's the story," he concluded; "and now you've got to keep your promise and give me my dance."

He so much offered what she wanted: she could reflect for but the briefest moment. She had justified her coming here. If there was no reason against her coming here, there could be none against her doing what was done by all the others that came. Behind, the crowd pressed; in front, the music invited; Tyrrell, standing ready, invited: Edith slipped into his waiting arms.

In the second bar, she faltered and lost step; but he righted her before her instant shame could enforce the error. Then the magic had its way with her: the magic of the music and a perfect partner. Without thought, without the wish or need to think, she was swept across the room on a rhythmic wind. They marched, reversed, marched again; Tyrrell was feeling his way with her, determining what she could do before she had done it, passing subtly from the simplest steps to the more complicated. And she could do it; she could do it all. That knowledge came to her in an engulfing triumph. They swung,

Koviloor Acadamy
they dipped, they pirouetted. Her brain could form no guess as to what the next evolution might be, and did not have to form one, for when the next evolution came her feet, whatever it was, proved that they had known it and expected it; they welcomed it and were a part in it. The flush deepened on her cheeks; her eyes mirrored the glory of her success. For now, for at least this brief minute, nothing else in all the world mattered.

The thing was in the air. It was like the old times that weren't so old, after all. The women with their hats on, the men in their business-garb, were dancing as freely as if they were dressed for a ballet, and as wildly. Girls on their way home from school and stopped here to steal this half hour of clandestine joy; wives balanced before their lovers while their unremembered husbands, oblivious of them, embraced the wives of other men not a yard away; mothers clung laughingly to partners that, in other surroundings, they pretended to disdain, and spared not a glance for their daughters on the same floor with young men against whom the mothers' houses were barred. Strands loosened from the coiffures of next year's débutantes brushed the shining pates of elderly partners. Couples of the age of grandparents were as nimble as their last descendants. And through the maze, in and out, never interfering with another pair and always moving in absolute harmony with each other, more alone in that crowd than they could have felt on an aeroplane, Edith and Tyrrell passed.

The music stopped with what seemed to Edith a sudden clash. People that had left their tables for the dancing-floor ran back to the tilted chairs that reserved their places. Everybody was talking at once and laughing breathlessly.

"It was splendid!" The phrase came from Edith without foreknowledge.

But Tyrrell did not take the compliment to himself: he applied it to their union:

"It *was* a good dance. We're what they call a first-rate team, aren't we?" He looked about. "I *wish* one could get a table. Shall we go into the other room and look for one there?"

"Oh, no!" said Edith. The excitement of the dance was all the stimulant she wanted. "I'm afraid I've got to be going."

"Not yet!" He poured on her his full gaze. "Please!"

Koviloor Acadamy
She so wanted to talk as he did, but she could only repeat: "I'm afraid I've got to go."

"So soon? It can't be half-past five." He met her squarely: "Why do you have to go? And where?"

"Charley," she began—"he wouldn't——" Her brown eyes met Tyrrell's, and she stopped.

"Oh, bother Charley!" he laughed.

Somehow she found herself laughing, too.

"But he wouldn't——" she insisted.

"Very well, then," said Tyrrell; "in that case we'll have one more dance on the understanding that we *won't* bother him."

If he had not said it with a smile, she would have said that he proposed a treasonable conspiracy; she would have refused to join it; but Tyrrell's smile made all the difference: it belittled Charley's objections without scorning Charley; it pointed out that half of the best people in this room were doing much what Tyrrell proposed; it banished all difficulties and made lightly merry of every scruple. As plainly as if he had spoken it, and far more persuasively than any speech, Tyrrell had told her:

"It's quite all right; it's, in fact, the custom; we'll simply never mention this to Charley: where's the harm?"

She had a vision of the Greenwich Village living-room, of the husband harassed, bragging, sodden. The fires of Spring burned in her heart. . . .

"Please," said Tyrrell: "just one more dance."

"Well—just one more," she conceded.

So, when the music started again, these two started with it, and in movements more intricate than they had attempted before. Across the web of dancers they shot with an incredible swiftness. He took his arm from her back, tightened his hold of her hand, sent her whirling from him and pulled her to him. It was attack and surrender. Again he held her close and spun her 'round. Once she felt his hand quiver and looked quickly at him: he blushed like a girl. She was ashamed to know that this ability to make him quiver did not shame her; she was ashamed, and yet it was a shame that she liked. Nor could it last; the dance permitted nothing to last. Change of step followed upon change. He was like no partner that she had ever known; for her he was a better partner than the thin instructor at the school in Forty-fifth Street: Tyrrell was not a force pulling her; he was a consciousness usurping

Kovilloor Academy
her own and directing her body in the stead of her own consciousness.

It was an appreciable time, when this dance had ended, before her consciousness returned to its dominion. Then she was leaning against the wall with Tyrrell pleading:

"*One* more, please?"

But this was a moment for firmness. Charley would be waiting at home for her; he would ask questions.

"I must go right away," she said.

Perhaps Tyrrell knew her reasons. He changed his plea.

"To-morrow, then? It's such fun, and we do work so well together. We can try it at——"

She shook her head. Somehow it seemed important not to make an appointment for so early a date.

"Then how about the next day?"

"I'll meet you here," she said, "on Saturday"—Charley did not observe the Saturday half-holiday—"at half-past four."

§ 5. It was nonsense to think evil of such things; Charley was as old-fashioned as his father, and Charley must be made to see it. When she reached her lodging-house, she looked at it with distaste; but she comforted herself with the thought of the coming Saturday.

She went up the stairs humming "Old Man River."

§ 6. Charley was seated at the table. There was a bottle and a glass beside him. His mouth was drawn down at the corners; the veins on his nose were purple. He did not get up to greet her. He said:

"Where you been, anyhow?"

She couldn't tell him now—she couldn't do it. Tyrrell had been right.

"Out," she said.

Charley snorted. "I guess I ought t' know that. I been waiting long enough for you. I asked you *where* you been?"

She could not take her gaze from him. His froglike eyes stared back in sullen dullness. His clothes were worn and rumpled. His face was set. He was a picture of failure.

"I went for a walk," she said.

He poured himself a drink.

"Have one?" he asked, nodding at the bottle, but not offering to pour for her.

Koviloor Acadamy
All the intoxication of the dance had gone from her; she felt the need of whisky.

"Thanks," she said, and took some.

The fresh dose of alcohol changed, for a moment, his mood. His glance played slowly over her and unendurably softened.

"Don' le's go out for dinner," he said. He settled himself in his chair. "Le's have a good talk. I'm not hungry." He beckoned her toward him. "Come over here an' sit down on m' knee. I remember once when I *was* good an' hungry, though. It was out in China, an' we'd been under fire all day. We used to——"

"I won't come over there!" she flashed at him. "And I'm sick and tired of hearing what you *used* to do!'

For a moment he loked at her in round-eyed incomprehension. Then the force of her defiance beat into his dulled brain. He sprang up, his eyes blazing.

"You shut your mouth!" he commanded. "I'm goin' to be master in m' own house."

But Edith laughed at him:

"You call this your 'house'!"

He walked unsteadily around the table to her; but she stood her ground, her chin up. His hand was raised. He stopped before her, swaying ever so slightly. He clenched his hand, met her eyes, and then only shook a finger in her face.

"Jus' a moment, please. I want you understand I won't have you talk this way to me. You stan' up here an' say—an' say—— Well, you know what you say, an' so do I, all right, all right. I won' stand for it, that's all: I won' stand for it. I'm not the soft kind that'll stand for what Jim stood."

She saw by his opened hand he was afraid of her, and she would use that fear.

"You're drunk!" she cried. "Drunk! Aren't you ashamed of yourself? It's all you're fit for, being drunk is, and you're working hard at it all the time, while I stay home and wash your dishes and mend your clothes. You'll be sick in a minute, the way you were last week, and the place will be in a mess. If you are, you'll clean it up yourself. I'm done with such chores. I'm not your hired-girl." Her Ayton vocabulary returned to her, and after it the memory of her life after leaving Ayton. "You needn't talk about Jim. He was a bad lot, but you haven't got anything on him—not a *thing*. Go to bed. Do you hear me? Go to bed!"

She took him by the collar. He went pale with fright, and

Koviloor Acadamy
then burst into the tears of maudlin repentance. He tried to embrace her, and when she drew away he caught her free hand and covered it with damp kisses.

"I'm sorry, Edith," he whined. "I'm sorry, truly I am. I love you. You know I love you. My God, but I love you! Only I'm so worried; I'm so worried. . . ."

She pushed him into the next room and let him fall upon the bed. She locked the door on him, came back, and sat down at the window, her chin in her hands, her eyes toward the sordid street.

What had happened was nothing fresh. It was a straw; but it was the last straw. To the letter of her contract with him she would be loyal; she had to be loyal: there was nowhere for her to go but these miserable quarters. When the ultimate disaster overtook him, she would have to be here to suffer it; but in the meantime she would take what harmless joy life had left for her, and she would never tell Charley.

Koviloor Acadamy

THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

YET she let Saturday go by without keeping her appointment to meet Tyrrell.

Had she been told that this was because of any feeling that to keep the appointment would be doing a wrong, she would have denied the statement indignantly. Had she been accused of cowardice, she would have denied that. She would have denied the suggestion that her action sprang from a desire to make herself less facile or more rare in the eyes of the Bostonian. She would have denied any motive that might have been suggested, and she was conscious of none; but she did not keep the appointment.

She sat at home all that afternoon. She was thoroughly resolved not to go out; but she was annoyed when the entrance of Diana made going out impossible.

"You wouldn't come to see me; I waited, but you wouldn't come," said Diana, "and when I couldn't wait any longer, I had to come to you. It's because I've such news for you."

Diana was irresistibly radiant. Edith's eyes, filled with memories of the Fifth Avenue standards, would not have approved the clothes that her guest used to wear and thoroughly disapproved of the drab and shapeless gown which was now presented to her, but the face above it was too wonderfully alight. That was more than happy; it was flutteringly happy, to be sure, but it was also proud and lucidly satisfied.

Women understand these things, and Edith understood this one. It was marvellous; it gave the lie to all Diana's Principles, but there it shone, as flagrant as an electric sign on Broadway.

"You've married!" cried Edith, and kissed her.

It was a kiss of spontaneous well-wishing, even if it rose from a heart that, at the words, felt the twinge of pain.

"How did you know?" asked Diana. "There wasn't a line in the papers. We couldn't have allowed anything so conventional as that."

"I guessed it from your face, you goose," said Edith, and then: "Who's the man?"

Koviloor Acadamy

"The man?" Diana's echo knew of but one possible man among all men—the superman, the sole example of his "type"; in brief: "Archibald." She sat back, serenely waiting for Edith to recover from the stupefaction of that glory.

Edith did her best to evince stupefaction, and indeed she experienced a proper amount: it was only the kind that she failed in. She was fond of Diana; without agreeing with her theories, even sometimes being shocked at them, scornful of them, or more fatally bored by them, she had a high respect for the mind that could understand them and accept them as vital things, and she had a still higher respect for what she took to be the courage necessary for their public utterance. Of even greater importance to her was her personal liking and gratitude: she liked Diana, as she would have said, "for herself"—which is incontinently the surest sort of liking—and she was grateful to her for an attitude, prompted by whatever "Principles," which had been maintained in the face of circumstances altogether too terrible for Mrs Dunbar. Yet here was Diana, the believer in "free unions," sacrificing herself in marriage to an implausible parasite and giving her goodness to a man that wore a yellow silk sweater and posed in knickerbockers! Comment came irresistibly:

"Not really married—not regularly?"

"Certainly!" That, too, came irresistibly: before her brain could check it, Diana's tone resented the implication of the question.

"Oh!" Edith was confused; she wanted to repair her error. "I asked only because I thought—— Well, you know you said you didn't believe in that sort of thing."

"And I don't." It was Diana's brain that was talking now.

"And of course neither does Archibald. We're not that type. We hold that love ought to be strong and free. But, you see, there's my position. After all, I'm only a wage-slave, and the Library-Board is so narrow and reactionary: first it wouldn't have assistants that were married, and now it won't have them that aren't. You know what I mean: for a long time they wouldn't employ us if we were married women, and now that they're letting some of us marry, they'd discharge us if we took the end without the means. That's their unreasonable way: they can't understand Principles."

"Then you're going to keep on working?"

"I would not," said Diana, "be economically dependent on

Koviloor Academy
any man. You ought to know me better than even to hint it: I am a Freewoman."

Edith apologised. She wondered whether, in this case, the economic independence of the wife did not consist in her economic exploitation by her husband; so she was not surprised at what Diana said next.

It developed that even radical women took less interest in an attached than in an unattached philosopher: women formed the majority of the admirers that had been subscribing to van Houyz's support while he wrote at his Great Work; the Great Work was by no means finished; it had, of course, to go on, and the subscribers would not subscribe after the apostle of Woman's Freedom had been pre-empted by any union, be it never so free.

"I might have defied the Library-Board," Diana pursued, "but Mother's still living and she belongs to her own Generation; she worships all its Conventions, and I didn't like to hurt her. I might have deceived everybody, but I felt This was something too sacred to lie about, and, besides, it would be sure to be discovered. So you see, if I lost my job, we'd be hard up. The subscriptions had all stopped—all but splendid Sylvia's. As Archibald says, the shadow of woman's slavery still darkens the mind of even the emancipated."

"I see," said Edith.

"And so Archibald pointed out to me how we believed that love ought to be strong and free: it ought to be so strong that it could bear even the weight of marriage, and so free that a mere form of words before a magistrate couldn't really chain it. We simply had a magistrate marry us—just formally, you understand—and made our mutual mental reservations. In that way we could please Mother and the Board and still be true to our Principles. Isn't Archibald ingenious?"

What Edith said was:

"So you consider yourself quite free?"

"Absolutely," Diana nodded: she accented the third syllable.

"And you let your husband be free, too?"

"Of *course*. I wouldn't compromise. I wouldn't compromise with sacred things. Ours is a free union. I know Archibald will never use his freedom—but he's free."

Edith comprehended a great deal now. She comprehended the increased ugliness of Diana's clothes: did not Diana's husband hold that a fair face should suffer from no dressmaker's

Koviloor Acadamy
competition? It was an excellent way of concealing one's wife's beauty from predatory eyes and saving it all for oneself. Assuredly Archibald *was* ingenious!

Diana was running on and over with her happiness. She had a few damning words of scorn for the weak-kneed subscribers to the Great Work and no end of praise for Sylvia Tytus: "The only *real* Radical of them all, my dear, and I adore her." Finally she came to the point at which Edith had throughout this interview feared she would arrive: to the Wimminist Leeg and Edith's reasons for never joining and bringing Charley.

There was no longer a hope of evasion. Indeed, there was small desire for one.

"He wouldn't hear of it," said Edith.

"Wouldn't——" Diana refused to credit that: "What do you mean?"

"I mean he hates those things; I mean I suppose he's what you call a reactionary, and——" She could have almost let her annoyance at Diana's marriage add, "I'm one, too," but she said: "And he wouldn't permit me to go alone. He just wouldn't have it, if I asked him; that's all."

It served, at all events, to end the call before Charley could return home and find there a caller he disliked. Diana stiffly rose.

"I never thought it," she said. "I never thought it of him, and I certainly never thought it of you. My dear, I couldn't guess that *you* belonged to the Servile Type. Why, he's—he's no better than your First One! And after all you've done for Principle!"

§ 2. Edith might say to herself that Diana was now the last one to talk of Principle. She did say it. She said it, for days after her caller had gone, vehemently. But the Parthian shot rankled. She saw her husband with a vision ever clearer. She would be no man's slave. . . .

She drank a little more than she had been drinking: she was so hopeless and so worn out. She let the memory of Diana's happiness insist upon comparison with her own lot. She thought that the renaissance of her beauty was losing its force, and she used a bit more rouge than had been her recent custom to strengthen the weakling. On the next Wednesday —it was one of the days when Charley was to sleep at his father's house—she went to the Delevingne.

Kovilloor Academy

It was the same scene that she had been a part of a week ago. The place was having an enormous vogue—probably because no New Yorker could pronounce its name. The same people were riotously performing the same riotous dances to the same riotous music. It seemed to Edith as if they had never stopped. There were the schoolgirls, the mothers, the grandparents; there was that couple which might have served for the models of Jim's picture. Edith had said to herself that she was there only to look on, but when she heard somebody point out one pair of dancers as professionals, she eyed them enviously and began to eye the other dancers hungrily.

In the room were many women as openly unattended as she was, and Edith noticed that some of these freely accepted, sometimes almost as freely sought, dancing-invitations from men that had come alone. When a sleek lad approached her, she indignantly refused him: she felt soiled by his address.

She saw George Mertcheson and tried to hide from him, but this time he recognised her easily enough. He recognised her with the whole crowd between them and advanced in his loose-jointed stride. The exercise of dancing had heated him: his straight hair stood out from his head, and his sallow cheeks were faintly flushed. A smile crowned his insignificant chin.

"Hello!" he said as he had said when she went to his office. "Where did *you* drop from?"

Edith saw that he meant superbly to ignore the indignation in which she had parted from him. That was George's way: he was the sort that smile and wait. His unfinished ears seemed to be trying harder than ever to escape from his head.

"I often come here," said Edith. She looked straight across the room, but she thought that the wart on his nose was growing.

"Well, that's good. Now we can have a dance once in a while."

"I'm not dancing."

His eyelids had their nervous flicker:

"Oh, come on!"

"I am not dancing."

§ 3. Tyrrell rescued her. It was a long time since she had been so glad to see anyone. She was grateful for his coming; grateful, too, because, as he led her away, he made no comment on the man that had been talking to her and asked no

Koviloor Acadamy
question as to why she had failed to keep her appointment for Saturday. He seemed tolerantly to understand.

"You'll dance?"

It was as if she were pushed into his arms—pushed there by all the horror of her home, by the pursuit of Mertcheson, by the weight of unendurable days, and the pressure of advancing penury. She went a timid step forward; the music crashed into a wild revel.

Tyrrell seized her, and the world retreated. He held her tight; he let her go. He flung her from him and drew her back. Again they were one; again his consciousness struck hers into abeyance and ruled her body.

Once, in a flying instant, she saw his eyes and read a hot passion there. He realised that she read it; but he pretended nothing, not even that he did not know her reading. Without lessening their pace, he said:

"I'm sorry."

"That's all right," she heard herself saying as he seized her once more. And then she heard herself saying: "It doesn't matter."

Why did she think it did not matter? A few months ago, one month ago, she would have thought it mattered a great deal. Why did she think it did not matter now? She could find no answer and no time for debate.

He spun her body about his own. The dance became a frenzy. She was off her feet: he was whirling her in his arms. She felt herself falling, only to be caught up, in perfect time and unison with the music and with him, and whirled again and thrown again, and again clutched close. She ended breathless, almost fainting, yet tingling with the joy of it and not deaf to the whispered commendations of the onlookers that had been watching her and Tyrrel, to the exclusion of all the other dancers on the floor.

"Are you doing anything this evening?" her partner was asking.

Still too short of breath to answer, she only shook her head.

"Then I'll tell you what *we'll* do: we'll have a quiet dinner somewhere where there is a good show and then we'll charter a taxi and make the Grand Tour of the night-clubs.—Oh, just to dance, of course!"

Edith, not given to self-analysis, did have moments, long afterward, when she sought the reasons for her consent, or,

Koviloor Acadamy
rather, tried to select, from the many forces that in those days conquered her control, the one force to which the blame for this action could most justly be attributed. She never succeeded. There was the old desire for ascendency over circumstance, the perjury in the divorce-suit with its progeny of deception: Charley's necessary deception and hers of his father, of their dwindling social world, eventually and inevitably of each other. Everything so perfectly resulted from everything else: there were the other forces—the poverty depending upon the deception of the father Vanaman, itself with the other lies dependent upon the initial perjury, and the need, the keenly actual need, of some relief, which the pressure of poverty created. It intensified to an abnormal degree the purely human appetite for joy; it made for more failure, as only failure can, and sharpened her individual fear and hatred of failure; it created the debts and the steadily approaching financial collapse, and cultivated her horror of them; it effected the slow uncovering of the real Charley with that uncovering's suspicions of unfounded bombast, its certainties of drunkenness, weakness, futility. The children of what she had done at law, or what the law, as she put it, had made her do, numbered among them the scorn and loss of such friends as Mrs Dunbar, the loss of the very things that she had done it all to gain—even, at last, the ill-concealed scorn of Diana. They made her feel Diana's happiness, reasonless though such a happiness might be, as a goad in her own side; they sharpened tiny arrows of truth in the arsenal of Diana's now recalled, if once derided, talk of woman's freedom. They had brought Edith to this floor, to the example of the gay "best people," as well as the gay worst, about her; to the maddening music; the seductive frenzy of the dance; the thrill of the recent contact, still tingling in every least muscle of her body; to Tyrrell himself, appreciative, considerate, confident, a gentleman, apparently determined to go not too far, and demonstrably the symbol of everything from which she had been thwarted. They led forward toTyrrell, and they led back, they converged at their source, in Jim. . . .

Edith, just now, experienced nothing save the total result. She made no effort to disentangle, differentiate. It was enough, it was too much, that the finer loyalty had been shorn of its justification, and that the mere instinct toward traditional loyalty, the product of early conventional environment —weakened by the action which drove her to her first divorce

Koviloor Academy
and by all the first divorce had entailed—stopped, as yet, only short of overt, physical disloyalty.

"Thanks," she said, "that would be fun."

§ 4. They went to a new restaurant for dinner, where they sat in an oak-wainscoted cellar among clattering knives and forks, and, presently, the din of a score of half-stripped cabaret-performers, who sang and danced on a stage and paraded about the room, jangling sleigh-bells in the diners' ears. Its only simple note was the costly simplicity of the meal that Tyrrell ordered: that was like what Jim used to order when he had a windfall, and wholly unlike the plunges that Charley used to make when, in the days of his surreptitious courtship, he unexpectedly got hold of some money.

The runaways lingered too long over their coffee: they had to cut the theatre; but then they began their tour. They went to one garish place after another, Tyrrell's bearing always lending her the air of polished detachment at the very moments of their taking glad part in the revelries. It was light and hurry. Guests of every sort—and there were all sorts at each place—ate rapidly with the air that they were doing it simply to fortify themselves for the next dance. These gulped drinks and dashed back upon the floor so soon as the sweating musicians could catch breath to resume their playing.

And Edith danced with Tyrrell. At first she feared to; then she wanted to; but through all that earlier portion of the evening she encountered in him no repetition of the indiscretion at the Delevingne.

They went to a place called the "68 Club" and to one called the "50-50"; they visited a half-dozen *cafés-dansants*. At some the dancers were brilliant in evening clothes and jewels and ball-gowns; at others only the women had attempted decoration and that in a manner which would permit their going home—if they ever went home, or had homes to go to—in the street-car or afoot; but at most the several classes inextricably mingled, and at all the attendants knew Tyrrell. Here were rich and poor, good and bad, shopgirls and women of wealthy leisure, débutantes, and street-walkers; and here were wealthy men and procurers; bank-clerks, shop-clerks, released for the night from grey routine and running to these restaurants as children run from school to play, trying to forget to-morrow. Where did the poorer get the money? Whence did the older snatch the energy? How would the

Koviloor Acadamy
workers ever get to work on time? And how would they ever do their work when they got to it?

"They won't," laughed Tyrrell, when she asked him. "And they'll be scolded and docked for it by employers who are unable to go through with their own work—and all the crosser for that—because *they'll* have been dancing too."

Everywhere there was plenty to drink; nowhere did Tyrrell drink much. At several "clubs," he bowed to acquaintances, and once he introduced her to a quite colourless friend who asked a dance, hung on her, hopped about out of time, and bumped her into other dancers—things that could not happen when she and Tyrrel danced together.

As the night deepened, the dancing was intensified. A few of the revelers remained graceful, but some were childish or maudlin in their contortions, and more were vicious. Mere abandon became odious intention; the tango of the Delevingne descended to grotesque posturing reminiscent of Harlem; a pair of dancers became a quadruped. At one of the last places that Tyrrell and Edith visited the gyrations were freely vile. The men sweated, the women crooned the music. Eyes were either bright or filmy, faces and figures yielding or provocative; the fact that these dancers were clothed became the final touch of lewdness. For anybody not sharing the madness, it was an incredible spectable, a nightmare.

Tyrrell did not share it to the prevailing degree. He took her away, but masked his shame, as the American will, with a word of derision.

"The poor things call that dancing," he said. "I didn't know they'd got so low, and I apologise. We'll go to one real place for one more real dance, just to obliterate the impression, Mrs Vanaman."

Once, as a small girl, Edith had furtively gone to look on at a dance given by one of the Ayton volunteer fire companies: it was decorum to this. When Tyrrell spoke, she was trying hard to apologise to herself for the dancers at whom she now was looking; she was saying that, at the best Ayton dances, a girl was certain to be kissed in a corner, whereas the present convention was at all events more honest; but she had not convinced herself and she was glad to have the Bostonian feel about it as he plainly did feel.

The place that he last of all took her to did indeed, however, obliterate the ugly impression made by its predecessor, and restored, almost instantly, the magic she had nearly lost. It

Kovilloor Academy
was smaller, quieter, and the people in it were of a better sort. They danced as wildly, but they danced with grace. They revived the poetry and the charm.

He moved with her on the crowded floor among soft lights and dancers quietly dressed. The air was perfumed and the music gentle. With the first steps she forgot the scene they had left behind, forgot everything but the joy of rhythmic music and escape. The vulgar faded; for these few minutes she would be happy, and nobody that mattered would ever know. Tyrrell would not tell Charley; this was their secret. Here was at least respite from despair. Her brown eyes kindled; a genuine flush returned to her cheeks; youth returned: she was beautiful.

Well as they had danced together before, they had never danced so well as now. They composed dances as they went along, in absolute and gracious harmony; they made those delicate impromptu variations which are like the discoveries of innocent lovers and the opportunity for which is the secret of the modern dancing's attraction. Slowly, as before, her will became the creature of his and his directed her. His body was the master—his soul, she said—and then was deliciously frightened at the thought. Their movements had the dignity of a minuet, then quickened into something all their own—all his. Her every muscle was in rhythm with him. She felt the warmth of his body against hers, the play of the muscles in his legs, the beating of his heart, the hot breath that now struck her flaming cheeks. Their thighs crossed, she held him with her eyes, as he held her with his will, and she was glad to hold him and to have his wise, vibrant being holding her. He drew her closer. She found that he was looking at her oddly: his glance was half veiled. Tighter he held her and tighter; his lips parted. She remembered life again; she was so tired of it. . . .

She drew hastily away. She stopped dancing.

"Let's sit down," she panted, but not from the exercise of the dance. "I'm tired. I think I'd better be going home."

His agreement was instant, unquestioning. His face had changed, at her word, to the face she had known when they talked on Forty-second Street.

"I do hope I haven't overdanced you," he said.

She denied that, and until the taxi came she talked heedlessly, lightly, saying anything to cover the evidences of what

Koviloor Acadamy
she felt. She would not let him see her home, protest as he did, and he asked no embarrassing questions.

§ 5. She was not clear precisely what it was she had felt; but she knew that she had passed through the door of light and could pass through it again. She would have to come back; but she could return through it as often as she chose.

She chose frequently, and she found Tyrrell always politely eager and unquestioning. No dance ever again moved him as that last dance of their first evening together had moved him, or, if one did, he was sufficiently lord of himself to hide the effect of it. Their talk was of indifferent things, and once she quickened his interest in the Vanaman Receiver. Under Tyrrell's care, she came to know intimately the *thés-dansants* at all the " best places." In the women's rooms of these hotels and restaurants she met and made some genuine acquaintances with women not unlike herself, unhappy women restlessly in quest of a restless happiness. The easy air of the resorts made such friendships facile, and, even in her worst moments at home, Edith's pulses beat to tango-time. She rarely contrasted this secret life with her existence in the Greenwich Village lodgings, and when she did it was to tell herself that she had not fallen in love with anybody else : she had merely fallen out of love with Charley. Once, when she first knew her present husband, she had conceived of love as an elemental force that sweeps from the infinite, through the universe, catching up and engulfing such frail human estrays as chance in its path and sweeping them forward to its own ends. Then she saw that, in its power, a pair of lovers were as helpless as two bits of driftwood on a tidal wave; now she saw the necessary consequence : that the wave, having borne them with it, reckless of their will, finally, when it is through with them, tosses them away.

Koviloor Acadamy

FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

ONCE, on an afternoon at a restaurant where wine could be had, and when Tyrrell had left her for a few minutes to telephone, Edith saw van Houyz and Sylvia Tytus at a nearby table. There was a white-wine pail beside them, and the Philosopher was counting out, with commendable slowness, and an unproductive glance toward his companion, the money for the bill. It was four o'clock: which meant that Diana was still safely at work. Van Houyz, his glance failing to wheedle Sylvia, paid: which meant that Diana paid. Champagne and a tango-tea: Edith loathed the woman for her treachery to friendship and the man for his treason to marriage.

"Of course Diana would say he might," Edith reflected; "but of course she'd never think he would."

Even that couple's clothes were voluble. Sylvia, smiling with every one of her prominent teeth, could never look the beauty Diana held her to be, but she was dressed in a gown so fashionable that she would not have risked it at the New Radical Club; and the curling hair and beard of Woman's evangel again surmounted a suit of strict conventionality.

"I'll bet Diana doesn't know a thing about this picnic," thought Edith. "Of course they've come up here to get as far away as they can. They think this is the last place they'd meet any of their radical friends in. I've a notion to let them see me."

At once she had the chance. Van Houyz rose and left a tip that the waiter choked over. Sylvia rose, too. The pair came toward the door near which Edith was standing.

"How do you do?" said Edith. She advanced bravely and offered her hand.

The effect disappointed her. Sylvia's immediate frigidity was unmistakably not fear of scandal: it was jealousy for her prize. Van Houyz's fishy grin—Edith comprehended this with a disconcerting pang—accepted her as being at this place on the same sort of errand that brought him.

"How sweet to see you here!" He squeezed her hand.

Koviloor Acadamy

She understood his meaning. He meant: "We're in the same glass-house: of course we won't stone our common shelter." She would not let him have it so. She said:

"I'm coming 'round to see you and Diana as soon as I have a moment to spare. I haven't congratulated you yet. She's the finest woman I know." Edith, with prodigious innocence, looked beyond him. "But where is she?"

Van Houyz was imperturbable:

"She has her duties to the public; she's at the library. How's Mr Vanaman?"

"Quite well. He'll be back in a minute. Won't you wait? He'd be so glad to meet Miss Tytus and you again."

It was a daring bluff, but they did not call it.

"I'm afraid we can't," Sylvia interposed: her projecting teeth looked dangerous.—"We have to hurry to the library to meet Diana."

("What a lie!" thought Edith. "I hope Mr Tyrrell doesn't come just yet. I must nail that lie, even if they nail mine.")

"Yes," said the Philosopher: "we shall have to hurry."

Edith held his hand.

"Do you know, I scarcely recognised you?" she said. "You're—you're dressed so differently. Of course, though, you weren't wearing knickers when Diana and you called on me, any more than you're wearing them now. *Don't* tell me you've given them up."

"If I'd known you would be here, Mrs Vanaman, I should have worn them. But, then, how could I guess it?"

Sylvia snarled.

"You see," Edith explained, "knickers are only the half of long trousers, and I thought you believed in them, Mr van Houyz, on the principle of the less the better."

"We don't believe in clothes at all," Sylvia answered for him. "Clothes only hide the body; the body is part of the self; to hide the self is to deceive. Therefore, clothes make us liars." She tugged at the Philosopher's disengaged arm.

"Oh, it's the clothes that do it, is it?" Edith pondered. "Still," she added, over a study of Sylvia's knee-length skirt, "they do keep us warm, don't they?"

"We have to hurry," said Sylvia.

§ 2. At home the end seemed very near.

Charley drank steadily. His face, though still fat, was drawn and haggard, the bags under his eyes were purple. His

Koviloor Acadamy
creditors threatened; the invention was motionless. For one-half the time spasms of passion for Edith alternated with fits of jealousy, prompted by the idea that she regretted Jim; for the other half he was breast-deep in lethargy. He had made, to gain his wife, the largest sacrifice that he knew how to make, and it proved, in the face of disproportionate rewards, a larger sacrifice than his large love could sustain. If there were not an immediate financial relief, there would be a speedy emotional collapse.

Edith maintained her relations with Tyrrell, who kept them where she wished: on the plane of what he considered good-fellowship. She suffered with him no descent to the pit of overt disloyalty; she understood that he had begun by being only casually interested in her, as he would have been in any pretty woman, and that he had ended in a fondness for her company because she was an excellent dancing-partner. But there were troubles elsewhere: the landlady threatened and might at any moment expose her embezzlement to Charley, and the coming of Charley's business disaster, she knew, could now be a question of but a very short time. She tried to shut her mind to it and keep up the outward signs of peace. In order to bear, with at least passivity, the assaults of her husband's intermittent passion, she drank with him freely, and to cover the evidence of this she resorted to frequent cosmetics.

There came a flash of hope. It came with Charley when, one noonday, he arrived home unexpectedly for luncheon.

His cheeks were tinged with the excitement of it. He seemed almost a lad again. So far as liquor was concerned, he was sober, yet he kissed Edith almost boisterously.

"I've put it over!" he cried. "I've put it over at last! If we only manage this new deal right, the hard times are ended."

Edith was all questions.

"You remember that fellow Bob Tyrrell you saw that time—well, that time you were at the office," Charley explained. "He's our meat."

Edith remembered.

"What'd you think of him?"

"I didn't think much about him. He was too busy with the stenographer, and, besides, he looked a little like—like Jim."

Charley's face clouded.

"Oh, don't talk about Jim now," he said; but he brightened immediately. "We've got a success that'll make Jim green

Kovilloor Acadamy
with envy. And, anyway, Tyrrell's not really like him—same height and manners, maybe—that's all, A little stuck-up, like Jim, but that's just how I could work him; I'd learned the sort. This man's eyes are grey and his nose is like one of those statutes of an old Roman politician."

"Who is he, and what's he going to do for us?"

It seemed that Tyrrell was going to do the thing they wanted of anybody that would do it: he was going to provide the money needed to float the invention. Personally, Charley knew nothing of this patron beyond that he had once been brought to Vanaman's club before Charley was forced to resign from it, had met the inventor there, and, being told of the receiver, as every chance acquaintance was, became more and more interested until he was now tacitly promising his support.

Edith had gone to the window and was looking out.

"Are you sure he really has the money?" she asked.

"Trust me for that. I had Bradstreets look him up. I told you he was a rich young Boston fellow. He inherited no end of cash, and he's thinking of settling here in New York. That was enough for me. I've talked him 'round, and all you've got to do is to be nice to him."

"*I* have to be nice to him?" Edith did not turn. "What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean we're going to have him to dinner to-night."

She turned now, and her face showed sudden dismay.

"We can't have him here," she declared.

"Just a moment, please. Certainly, we won't have him here. Oh, just trust me to do the right thing, my dear. We're going to dine at the Delevingne." Charley chuckled. "Where's the liquor?" he asked. "I'm so worked up over this good luck I can hardly think."

"The Delevingne?" Edith's voice was sharp as she repeated the name. She added, quickly: "You know we can't afford that."

"Can't we, though?" Her husband drew from a trousers-pocket two bills, one for a hundred dollars and the other for fifty. "I guess those will a little more than pay the order."

"Charley!" She put out her hands for the money. "How did you get it?"

He did not surrender the bills; but he answered:

"By being a good little boy. I ran up to see father as soon as I'd hooked Tyrrell. Poppa's not so well; Mame's rather

Kovilloor Acadamy
worried about him—needlessly, I think, for he's been this way so often—but I told her where she could get me by 'phone any time to-day or to-night, and of course to-morrow first thing I'll run up there."

"But the money?"

"Oh, yes! Well, I told poppa I'd interested an expert—Tyrrell is an expert in a way: an expert investor, anyhow, and perfectly clear-headed—and the old man coughed up this much toward cinching him. Then, if I do cinch him, poppa'll come along in on the deal. We won't really need his money, then, but I guess we can use all we get."

Edith was suspicious. "You got all this by only saying that?"

"Not exactly." He put his arm around her waist. "He asked about you, and I had to—had to say we hadn't been seeing much of each other lately. Honestly, he can't stand any shock, you know, and you told me long ago to jolly him."

Edith's mind reverted to the dinner.

"Don't let's go to the Delevingne," she said. "Let's go somewhere else. Why do you want to go there?"

"Why don't *you* want to?"

"I don't know. It's—— I just don't want to."

"Well, it's too late to change now. I've reserved a table and ordered the dinner. They say there's a good cabaret there, and I've fixed things so's they'll serve us a li'l likker."

"I haven't any clothes fit for the Delevingne," said Edith.

"That don't matter," Charley assured her. "Wherever we went, it would have to be some place as good as the Delevingne. I thought you'd some pretty swell things left. Here, take twenty out of this fifty and buy a dress."

"Get a dinner-gown in one afternoon? And for twenty dollars? Charley, you must be crazy!"

It was a dash of cold water on the warm surface of his triumph. He rather steamed at her, but he agreed at last to give her fifty dollars, and Edith bought a ready-made gown for thirty.

§ 3. Her dress was of a soft ninon, simply made, white. Only the slightest immediate alteration had been needed. It was modestly cut, but showed her dazzling neck and shoulders, left bare her excellent arms, and gave every advantage to her tall figure and the brunette beauty of her face. Her cheeks wanted but little rouge to-night and her brows and lashes only

Koviloor Acadamy
the lightest touch of crayon. Her brown eyes shone with the radiance of stars in a clear sky after storm; her only ornament was her wedding-ring.

Most clothes a man may wear and give no hint of whether he has been brought up to wear their like; but not evening clothes: for good or ill, they betray him. Charley, in his, looked puffed and conscious; slim Tyrrell wore his as only he wears them who has worn them every evening since his boyhood. That was one of his few points of resemblance to Jim. Again, as she looked at him, Edith fell to wondering why, at their first meeting, he had recalled her former husband.

Of Tyrrell she was wholly confident: he would not show that they two had a secret. Upon Charley she scarcely dared count: she had warned him that a heavy drinker would not impress a prospective inventor.

"I tell you he's as good as hooked," said Charley.

"He's not on the kitchen stove yet," she answered.

Now here was her husband trying to satisfy his own thirst under a pretence of hospitality. While Tyrrell drank his surreptitiously served cocktail slowly, Charley had bolted his; he tapped anxiously on the table with his fingers until his guest had finished and then instantly commanded—it could not truthfully be called an invitation:

"Have another!"

Edith was afraid that Tyrrell might accede. He did not look at her; he looked about the wainscoted room in which he had dined with her.

"No, thank you," he said.

"One's no good," urged Charley.

"Two are worse—for me," said Tyrrell. He smiled. "I never take more than one."

She knew this was not correct, and she silently thanked him for the lie.

The lack of that second cocktail made Charley nervous. He had ordered a dinner that she knew to be too elaborate, one garishly unlike any dinner Tyrrell had ordered for her anywhere, and he was overbearing with the waiters. He knew that Edith felt she must watch him, and this intensified his nervousness.

Just as the clams were gone and the soup was served, there came a fanfare from the orchestra, and the cabaret performance began. It began with one of the singers that Edith and Tyrrell had heard together. Much of the following pro-

Koviloor Academy
gramme was the same, but to the woman's eyes and ears it seemed somehow coarsened. Charley was eating heavily; his guest ate little, drank less, and made polite small-talk. When the crowd of diners applauded, Charley joined loudly in the applause, but when two of the performers danced the tango he scowled darkly into his plate.

"I think this year's new steps are rank," he said.

Nobody replied.

"They're rank," repeated Charley.

The Bostonian's eyes did not seek Edith's, but a reply of sorts had been demanded.

"Wouldn't you rather say," he asked, "that it depends on the people who dance them?"

"That's what *I* think," Edith ventured.

"They ought to be stopped," said Charley.

"The best people——" his wife began.

"So much the worse for the best people. I've been hearing a lot about these steps and seen some: the worst of them make degenerates, and even the best make divorces."

It was the unfortunate word. Edith coloured. Charley coloured, and his annoyed nervousness increased. It grew painful not only to himself, but to his wife and his guest. When, presently, it drove him to rise and say, "Excuse me a minute," Edith was almost glad to have him go: at least, momentarily, it would quiet him, although she knew that, while gone, he would take, from his hip-flask, the "extra drink" which he was ashamed to take, in view of his guest, from the general supply. All the while he was gone Tyrrell continued to make small-talk as before, in the manner of a man that had met her for the first time this evening.

The dinner ran through course after course. On the whole, they did not dine badly, and there was what should have been plenty of bootleg Scotch under the table. Edith drank sparingly, because she saw that Tyrrell did not show the effects of what little he drank and because Charley was now so plainly drinking at random. By conversational diversions that she was sure Tyrrell observed, but that he pretended not to observe, she kept her husband from too heavy insistence upon his invention, and not until the coffee and brandy were served did she permit him to raise his glass to it.

"Well," said Charley at last, "here's to the receiver!"

Tyrrell bowed approval.

"To your good fortune!" said he.

Koviloor Acadamy

It was a waiter who interfered. He said Charley was wanted at the telephone, and when Charley returned it was with news that postponed the toast indefinitely. His face was tense and his voice shook. Edith had feared that he would come back drunk: he had come back shockingly sobered.

"It's from Mame," he began. He did not sit down. "My sister, I mean," he explained to Tyrrell. "There's been another sinking-spell. Morley's been sent for, and he says the end may be—mayn't be here yet, but that I'd better came at once."

Edith's fear of death sent her pale. "I'm so sorry," she whispered. Then she realised that all this was unintelligible to their guest. "My husband's father has been ill for a long while," she said.

Tyrrell rose at once, regret on his lips and in his eyes:

"You must go, of course."

Charley nodded solemnly, and, the bill paid, they hurried to the line of waiting motors before the door. Vanaman started to give the Lexington Avenue address to the chauffeur.

"But I'm not going with you, am I?" asked Edith. She did not want to seem heartless, but she dreaded a house into which death was about to enter, and she knew that at the Vanamans' she would be both useless and unacknowledged.

Her husband understood.

"That's true," he said. "My wife," he explained to Tyrrell, "won't go with me. There are circumstances——"

He hesitated painfully, and Edith found time to blush for his awkwardness, but Tyrrell saved the situation.

"If I may see Mrs Vanaman to your home," he suggested, "I shall be glad. I want to be of any help possible."

Charley was torn between his economic needs and his ever-present jealousy. His protruding eyes even signalled Edith to invent a refusal that was beyond his own contrivance. Tyrrell must have noticed the sign! Edith spoke quickly:

"That's very kind of you, Mr Tyrrell."

Death was here, the presence that she most dreaded. It had sent its cold breath into that hot room of revellers, among the gorged and the drunken, between the comic songs and the dances—such dances as she had danced with Tyrrell. There had been a time, not long since, when she could not have wished death even for Jim; and there had followed a time, there had followed many times, when she wished it for old Vanaman. Well, he was going to die now, old Vanaman, the

Kovilpor Academy
man that had so long stood between her and security, the man that refused her, the man whose death could alone, unless the invention succeeded, ease the curse that had begun its sway with her divorce. That wish of hers was to be granted, and, in the horror of having this thing which she had wanted, she could have screamed aloud. At that moment she would have given anything short of her own life to return the gift of his. . . .

"Thank you," she was saying; "I *am* a little—nervous. Get in. Charley, I'll wait up for you, of course—and you can telephone."

§ 4. She had simply wanted not to be alone with it: the realisation that father Vanaman was dying. But, as the taxi whirled her and Tyrrell up the street, she was the prey of a mob of emotions. She was overtried by her long, silent hatred of the husband she had divorced and by his constant presence in her mind; she was nervously ill from the poverty of her present life, the strain of Charley's business difficulties, and the fallacy of her position toward Charley's father. The growth of concealment and lies, her little gleam of joy hidden under a cloak of deception; the increase of failure, the advance of disaster; the loss of reputation, the loss of friends, the loss of love; they had broken her at last. The stimulants that had perforce become even her habitual aid were slowly growing to be her daily enemies; envy gnawed at her soul and sickened her heart. It was all bad enough, it was increasingly bad, that Charley should risk Tyrrell's financial support by playing the boor at dinner; it was the worst that next, with the horror of death upon them, he must first clumsily hint to his guest of the dying man's dislike for her and then further endanger his cause with the Bostonian by a flash of utterly unexpected jealousy; but worst of all were these certainties and salvations that had come like twin lightning-strokes to end the months of doubts and despairing. She had been in no mood fit to meet adequately the last moments of crisis: the hope offered that noon, the dreadful tidings of that night. The first relief had been too sudden and unexpected, the second was too terrible to be borne. Abruptly, she burst into uncontrollable tears.

Tyrrell tried to respect her feelings by ignoring them; but Edith's sobs were never of a sort to brook ignoring.

"I'm very, very sorry," he said at last. "It's dreadful news."

Because she was lonely and afraid, she put her hand on his.

Koviloor Acadamy
The action was as simple and spontaneous as that of a child appealing to its nearest protector. Instantly, the contact burst the last barrier of her so-tried reserve.

"Oh," she said, "it isn't only that: it's everything—everything! We're dreadfully poor, and his people don't like me, and I'm lonely; and now, with this—this thing about his father—I'm afraid—I'm just dreadfully afraid!"

Never before had she told him anything of her real self or her real life. Now, before they had reached Greenwich Village, she told him enough of her story for him to guess almost all the rest. Her divorce she did not mention, but there remained in her narrative enough to interest and move him.

He was a man of the world and therefore a sentimentalist. He felt for her; he pitied her. In all friendliness he offered to stay awhile in her rooms with her, and there he tried to quiet her by diverting their talk to other matters.

"But things will be all right now," he said.

"*Now?* That's just the dreadful worst of it—that it must all come out of—out of his father's death."

Tyrrell had sat on the couch in the poor room, apparently noting only such of her poverty as she chose to point out to him. His grey eyes were grave, his lips tender.

"But it won't," he explained: "it will come out of the success of his invention."

She turned her tear-stained face to him:

"You'll think I'm ungrateful not to have thanked you before for that; but I do thank you. I do. If it wasn't for you——"

"Please!" He raised his hand. "Don't talk of that."

There were whisky and water on the table, and he poured her some to steady her and, since she would take none without him, took a little himself.

"It will soon be all right," he told her.

She shook her head:

"Oh, you must see how it can't be!"

Tyrrell chose to see nothing.

"Your husband's father may pull through," he said. "These long illnesses often have scares of this sort without any quick fatality. He may even get well. It's almost sure that he won't die to-night."

"He will," she persisted. He will. I *know* it."

But Tyrrell kept it up, and, slowly, he made her see things much as he saw them. By the time that he thought it safe to leave her, she was recovering something of her accustomed

Kovilpor Academy
appearance of serenity, and looked again the beautiful woman that she generally was. To her he seemed a courteous man, wise, a strong and handsome comforter sent from the social sphere to which she could now again hope one day to attain.

"Good-night," he smiled as she gave him her hand. "I hope you will be all right now."

"Good-night," she answered. "You've been awfully good to me."

The hands were held for that mere moment longer than is common, which makes it so hard to release them and impossible to retain them. Her brown eyes were bright with fresh tears, tears of gratitude now and tears unshed. Tyrrell's face was gravely tender.

"I've done nothing, Mrs Vanaman," he was saying; and then again, "Good-night."

She heard him go down the stairs, and she heard the street door close behind him. She looked from the window at his lithe figure.

If only Charley's father got well, it would be all right to hope again. Even if Charley did not change with success, there would still remain much that she might have of what was worth while. She would be done with failure. . . .

§ 5. And a quarter of an hour later it was her heavy husband with a puffed and brutalised face who was standing where Tyrrell had said good-night to her. Charley had no sooner entered than he saw the two empty whisky glasses, and wrung from her the admission that Tyrrell had been in the room.

"So that's what you do as soon as I'm called away to my sick father!" he blustered.

She was innocent, and she was angry at his injustice. Her cheeks flamed and her delicate hands were clenched at her sides.

"You forget that you told me to be nice to him."

"Nice! That's one thing; but this——" From a hand that shook with anger, his thick forefinger indicated the empty glasses on the table.

"How dare you suspect me?" she demanded.

Charley chuckled bitterly. "How did *you* dare to suspect *me?*" he asked.

They faced each other, their eyes like drawn poniards. Each one knew the answer to those questions: they suspected each other because they had once deserved the suspicion of Jim.

Koviloor Acadamy

"Don't say it!" cried Edith. "Don't you dare to say it!"

Charley's lip curled upward, but his glance fell. Into Tyrrell's glass, he poured himself some liquor and drank it eagerly. He was almost glad to be the bearer of bad news.

"Well," he said, "while you've been flirting with that man, poppa died. I 'phoned Zoller and got him out of bed and asked him about the will. The will leaves everything to Mame if I'm ever married to you."

Koviloor Acadamy

FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

"DEAD? He's *dead?*"

Oh, she had known that this news would be brought her! Tyrrell had lulled her into temporary hope, but Charley's entrance ended that. She saw the thing in his first glance. She felt it lurking behind his cross-examination about her recent visitor, stealing nearer and nearer through her husband's denunciation of the visit. That cross-examination, those denunciations, had been hard to bear, but this was worse. It was all the worse because of its slow approach: all the worse because she *had* expected it.

"Yes, dead," said Charley.

He dashed into the next room. He slammed the door behind him, but she heard him crying there.

Edith could not cry. She saw perfectly how her husband could combine sincere grief for his father's death with sharp chagrin at his father's will; but she, for a half hour, sat with bowed head, clenched hands, dry eyes.

Then she got up. Hideous as was to her the sense that she had wished this death, she felt at last that she must meet practically its practical results to her.

She went into the next room. Charley, lying on the bed, raised a tearful face. She, standing in the doorway, began:

"You used to say you could make Mame do anything you wanted."

"I could, too," groaned Charley; "but lately something's came over her: I dunno."

"You've got to break the will."

"I've thought of that." Swayed by her resolution, he would not evade the issue. "And it can't be done."

"It must be."

"It can't be. I should think you'd had enough of law."

"It doesn't matter what I've had. I've been dragged into it so often that once or twice more can't count."

"But, Edith, I tell you it's no use. Zoller drew it, and he's the safest thing alive."

Koviloor Acadamy
"You can prove that Mame got your father under her thumb. You can prove he wasn't in his right mind. Look how long he'd been sick."

"That's just what I can't prove. Zoller knows; so does Mame. The servants know. So do poppa's friends: he was seeing them every few days at the time he made that will. We wouldn't have a leg to stand on."

He proceeded to explain; he showed her that her plan was unquestionably foredoomed.

She had sinned, then, and suffered for it, and was not to gather the fruits of her sin. Hysteria seized her. She said things that a few minutes since, she would not have dared even to think.

"It's too much; it's too much. His own son! The old fool! The old sneak! He *was* under Mame's thumb—Mame's and that foxey lawyer's! They were in this together; they worked him whatever way they pleased: Mame with her snivelling religion—I never did trust her—and Zoller, the shyster. They did him brown. And they made a dunce of you, all right. His own son! It was all because he hated me; it was all because Jim started that cross-suit. Well, if your father hated me, I know what he was: he was——"

Charley leaped from the bed.

"Stop that!" he cried.

"I won't. I'll say what I like for once. You know what he was as well as I do, but you're afraid of the truth: you always were. You! Why, it was all your fault. You've been a perfect dumbell about it right along. Anybody with any sense could have stopped him; but you couldn't. Look what Jim's done for *himself*; at his worst, he was a better business-man than you are. You can't make any money and you can't hold on to what you were born to." She flung herself on the bed from which he had risen. "Oh, I don't mean it; I don't mean it! I don't know what I'm saying. It's too much; it's too much!"

The tears he could never resist won him now. He went to her and began to stroke her hair.

"I know," he said. "I understand, dear. Don't you worry. It's all right. We can hold out a little longer. We can move up there till Tyrrell comes in with me. He's got some stock he wants to get rid of in a good market and then put that money in the sounder. It'll be all right: you'll see."

Koviloor Acadamy

§ 2. She had to do it: now that old Vanaman was dead, she had to live in the house from which he had barred her. In spite of her once expressed determination not to live with any relative of her husband, there was nothing else to be done but to take shelter with myopic Mame in the house on Lexington Avenue. Edith reminded Charley that Jim, with all his faults, had taken better care of her, but she bowed, however ungraciously, to the inevitable.

The seriousness of their position temporarily sobered both husband and wife. The next day Charley spoke to Mame about it.

"Do you think you can put us up here for a while?" he asked. "You ought to do that much for me, Mame. Besides, you'll be lonely, now, and Edith'll be company for you."

They were sitting in the darkened parlour, Edith with them. At the last moment she had summoned all her resolution and come along with Charley. Old Vanaman's body had not yet been brought downstairs; it remained in the big mahogany bed above. Their voices were monotonous and low. Mame sprawled limply in a chair; her spectacles were in her lap; she dabbed her eyes with a handkerchief. Edith leaned back on the sofa; Charley sat erect, his hands outspread on his knees.

"I want you to understand, Charley, that it wasn't my doing, that will wasn't," said Mame. "I hadn't the least idea."

"I know."

"But I got to follow it; I got to do what poor poppa wanted I should, and in it he says I got to keep what he leaves me. Mr Zoller particularly explained that to me this very morning —most particularly, he did."

Charley wriggled. He had hoped for a substantial gift. He looked at Edith, but Edith looked away.

"Still," Charley suggested, "you've got to invest it." He saw another light. "You do have to do that, don't you?"

"It's all invested," said Mame. "You know how poppa was."

Again Charley tried to catch his wife's glance, but her face was like the statue of a classic goddess.

"You'd change your investments if you could get better ones, wouldn't you?"

Mame met him with stolid gentleness:

"Poppa last week made me promise I wouldn't invest one cent of whatever he'd leave me in the receiver."

Her brother had not meant that she should see, before he

Koviloor Acadamy
brought her to it, what he was leading her to. He frowned.

"And you never told me—never told your own brother?"

"Mr Zoller——"

"If you'd told me I could have talked to poppa about it."

"That wouldn't have done any good, Charley. He had his mind all made up. He said I mustn't put a cent into the receiver till some regular radio company had endorsed it."

"Oh! —This was better.—"But I've got a man to endorse it who's as much an expert as any telegraph company. His name's Tyrrell. I spoke to poppa about him yesterday and poppa told me——"

"He told *me*," Mame repeated in the same sad monotone, "I mustn't invest one cent of what he'd leave me in the receiver till a regular radio company endorsed it."

Charley looked helplessly at Edith—and found no help.

"Well, then," he said, "about our living here?"

There Mame was acquiescent. She would be glad to have them.

"I'll do the housework," she added—"what the servants don't do of it. I'll need something to keep me busy, now I can't be busy with—with what I have been busy with so long." The handkerchief, twisted into a ball, went to her eyes. "I want to do my duty by everybody. I'm sure I'll only be too glad to do whatever I can for my own brother."

The omission of any wish to do what could be done for her sister-in-law was innocent. If Edith observed it, she gave no sign of observing. She spoke now for almost the first time during this interview:

"You're awfully kind." Her tone was cool and even, her face expressionless. "Of course you're going to have a trustee and of course you'll have Charley—doing for him what you can, you know. It will be so convenient to have your trustee right in the same house with you."

Charley turned sharply to her—hopefully, proudly. Mame listened with open mouth.

"Well," she slowly began, "Mr Zoller said——"

"Of course he did; but you wouldn't agree with him, would you? After all, Charley *is* your brother, and, as you say, you'll be only too glad—— I can telephone my own lawyer (that's Mr Leishman, and he's one of the best in New York) to send up the necessary application blanks and a power of attorney, too."

Mame was engulfed before she realised what all this was

Koviloor Academy
about. It was after Edith had telephoned, and while they were waiting for the arrival of the papers, that Mame said to her sister-in-law :

" Wouldn't you like to come and see poppa? "

Edith drew back. Her self-possession vanished.

" No—oh, no, thank you! "

" You wouldn't believe how calm and peaceful he seems," said Mame. " It's lovely. He looks so natural."

" I wouldn't," stammered Edith. " I mean I couldn't. I've never——"

They resumed their waiting for the emissary of the re-engaged Leishman. Mr Leishman carried this little matter through for Edith to its finish.

§ 3. Husband and wife moved into the old-fashioned house on the day after the funeral. It was a vast improvement on their lodgings in Greenwich Village, but Edith, on entering it to live there, felt as if there was closing on her something worse than the door of a prison.

She wore black, and her clothes were no conventional deception. Hourly, for many weeks, the thought of how she had wished father Vanaman's death was made more poignant by the house that had been his and all that it contained. Sleepless nights and memory-filled days wore her down. And there could be no immediate escape, no afternoons or evenings of relief : the latter Charley passed at home, the former offered no tango-teas to a woman in mourning.

She was a trial to Mame, and the servants, knowing the tenor of the will, openly disliked her. Though Charley's sister did not complain, Edith knew the nature of Mame's feelings and did not care. She wanted to rest : she took every chance of escape from the sort of labour that she had performed in her former lodgings. She gave no help to her sister-in-law; breakfasted in bed; required much waiting on. She liked dainty food and asked for it : she increased the household expenses. To Mame's gossip of the church, of Mrs Hamilton, and the missionary society, Edith had to listen, but she would not go to the services, and this, she was aware, incurred Mame's further disapproval.

In the intervals of settling, without giving bond, his father's estate, Charley was perpetually reminding his wife that they were, at all events, bulwarked against starvation; but then, as Edith soon observed, they were not much more than that.

Kovilpor Acadamy
Tyrrell, whom hard necessity compelled her husband to forgive, came to the house often, talked politely, and left early. At his office, too, Charley seemed to see the Bostonian, not so often, yet frequently. But the market was in the hands of the bears, and Tyrrell still refused to invest in the sounder before he could first profitably dispose of certain stocks that he wanted to sell.

In the middle of one of her sleepless nights, Edith turned from her thoughts about the elder Vanaman's death to notice that Charley was lying awake beside her.

"Except that we don't have to pay rent," she said, abruptly, "we're not one bit better off than we used to be."

Directness belongs to darkness: Charley took the speech as matter of course.

"We'll be all right," he said.

"That's what you were always telling me."

"Well, it's come true, partly, hasn't it?"

Edith lay still for some minutes. Then she said:

"I *wish* we could break the will!"

"You know we can't," said Charley.

"Then, why don't you get Mame to put something into the receiver?"

"Why don't I? You heard me try once, didn't you? I don't know what's got over Mame lately. She didn't use to be like this. She's not a bit like herself nowadays."

There was another pause, a longer one. They were thinking of the same thing. This time it was Charley who spoke first. He spoke of something that, in spite of his surprise when it occurred, he had never yet referred to:

"Why did you get Mame to give me that power of attorney?"

Edith buried her head in the pillow.

"How do I know?" she said. "Lets go to sleep."

§ 4. Charley did try again to persuade his sister to a practical interest in his invention. He tried next day. When he came downstairs in the morning, he found Mame, in an apron and with her head tied up in a towel, sweeping the parlour. Servants were permitted to sweep the rest of the house, but the parlour and the room in which the elder Vanaman had died were sacred.

"No," said Mame in reply to Charley's persuasions. "It's no use. Poppa said——"

"But you don't believe in your own brother?"

Koviloor Acadamy

"Yes, I believe in you. Of course I do; but poppa made me promise——"

"Just a moment, Mame. I've been going over poppa's papers, as you know. It's my duty now since he made you his only executor and you made me your agent. Well, I find that the highest interest you're drawing is six per cent. When the receiver gets a start, it's bound to pay seven from the jump, and there's nothing that it won't pay before it's five years older."

Mame's eyes were vague.

"About my being executor," she said: "I met Mr Zoller in the street the other day and he told me poppa'd told him of course I'd let him act for me."

Charley reddened.

"Why do you tell him everything you know? He's not your lawyer."

"He was poppa's."

"Did you tell him I had your power of attorney?"

"He didn't ask, Charley."

"Then don't tell him. Just forget him. I don't trust that man."

"O, Charley!" Mame nearly dropped her broom. "He was such a friend of poppa's."

"I don't care. I don't trust him. Now, about those investments——"

"No," said Mame; "it's no use, Charley. I never asked you to pay back that money I lent you while you were living downtown, and I never will; but I got to keep——"

"This isn't a loan!" her brother protested: "I'm not trying to get money away from you; I'm trying to give you some."

But Mame only shook her towelled head and enfolded him in her dull stare.

"Poppa made me promise not to invest a cent in the receiver till some big radio company approved it, and I got to keep my promise, Charley."

§ 5. Charley came away from this in a hopeless mood. Midsummer was here: again Capital was taking its vacation; the great men and heads of corporations, from whom a mere line of writing would have made the sounder's fortune, were gone to seashore and mountain; Charley had become a nuisance in their offices, a joke for their office-boys. The prospectuses and elaborate booklets that he had worked so hard to write

Koviloor Academy
and exhausted his credit to publish now brought replies from none save cranks and paupers; one by one his chances of interesting even private individuals of merely secondary means had receded out of sight, until only the figure of Tyrrell remained—and Tyrrell waited for the rise of a market that, in the July sun, slept peacefully. Charley knew that he could not hold out a month longer.

As he walked to the subway station, he passed a stationer's shop and saw that one of its windows was full of the reproductions of one picture. It was a picture of a young man and woman dancing the tango, and it was shown in every shape and size. There were copies and prints in colour, framed photographs, and a score of picture postcards.

"It just shows what people are coming to," he thought. "It ought to be stopped, that sort of thing ought."

Then his eye was caught by a placard in the window. It read:

"GET THE HABIT!"

Take along a copy of the most popular picture in America: James Trent's "Tango."

Charley's eyes bulged.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he said.

Jim was still making money, Jim was still successful! He was catering to the depraved appetite of the effete, and the effete were buying what he had to offer.

Charley went to the nearest saloon and had a drink. In the subway train he saw a girl going to work with one of the tango postcards in her hand. Downtown he passed other shop windows full of the things. No doubt Jim was paid a royalty on every copy printed. And here was he, Charley Vanaman, the inventor of something really useful, going bankrupt.

He wouldn't put up with it. He stopped twice more for whisky. He would end this situation. He would make a fortune that would dwarf the pennies piled up by this painter. He would take a big chance. He would take it now.

Then came the inspiration. The great radio companies had continued to show themselves obdurate; they could not be cajoled, and so Charley planned to force them: he would stake his last shred of credit on the hope that the market

Koviloor Acadamy
would rise within three weeks; he would form a company to be initially financed by Tyrrell's support; he would publish broadcast his story of the large corporations' ignorant and incompetent disregard of him, place it before the great American public, invest his final chances in that public's hatred of combinations of capital and devotion to fair play. He would begin at once, though the tide of indebtedness rose above his head and though the only thing that could save him from drowning would be the life-raft to be launched by Tyrrell.

By four o'clock that afternoon he had performed miracles in the way of stretching credit. He stood committed to his scheme. Twenty-odd days would decide, once and for all, in favour of final success or ruin.

§ 6. One can become accustomed even to horror. Edith first became accustomed to the thought of her father-in-law's death as an answer to her own desires, and then ceased to believe in it. The horror gone left her to boredom, but the boredom was scarcely less irksome. She missed Tyrrell terribly, but of course he wouldn't get into touch with her so soon after father Vanaman's death. Edith began to feel that Mame disliked her, was jealous of her, did not want her in the house: Mame never spoke sharply and never ceased to work for her; but Edith became none the less possessed by this idea. She had drunk a little to quiet what she took to be her conscience; now, however occasionally, she drank a little to ease her weariness. The strain had told on her; her cheeks needed more and more rouge, and she employed her crayon more arduously. There came an afternoon when she stole out of the house and stood in a hotel doorway, looking at the tango-dancers.

Some relief she had to have. It was as she said to Charley: except that they were free of rent, they were no better off than they had been in Greenwich Village; and the very exemption from rent bore with it the stigma of charity. In the long effect, it could count but little. Edith knew enough of her husband's business to know that his indebtedness must soon overwhelm him unless Tyrrell came to the rescue, and Tyrrell, encouraging in tone, remained slow in action. She foresaw that the old strain would begin again, had indeed begun, was daily tightening, and she was too tired to endure it.

She could read it in Charley. His words were stubbornly hopeful, but his bearing was that of a breaking man. His

Koviloor Academy
step was slow and his mouth lolling; he had long minutes of complete absent-mindedness when, in the midst of a conversation, he fell silent and sat staring at vacancy, from which he would return in a violent temper. His customary chuckle had lost its old mirth and its old conceit, was become a purely muscular habit. He was more than ever jealous of her past with Jim. When he walked in the street with her, he would, on one flimsy pretext or another, excuse himself and slip into the nearest bar; at home he made continual visits to the dining-room sideboard, in which he kept a bottle; and Edith had lost the heart to protest.

She thought about seeking consolation of Diana—she was no longer too proud to acknowledge the need of sympathy and to seek it—but the remembered that Diana had withdrawn herself from their last meeting in a mood anything but sympathetic. Edith was therefore not surprised to have Diana try to hurry by her when, one afternoon, they met on Broadway near Twenty-third Street.

"Aren't you going to talk to me?" The words came impulsively from Edith.

Diana stopped. A sad little smile played over her fine lips.

"I didn't know you'd want me to bore you," she said.

Edith took her friend's reluctant hand. Already she had made the first advance; for the moment repression ceased to matter.

"Oh, of course you think I'm a poor sort because I don't see things the way you do!" she said. "But—can't we be friends anyhow?"

The day was hot. Yellow sunshine poured into Madison Square. Through it the high edge of the Flatiron Building seemed to quiver northward as if it were the prow of a great ocean-liner seen from a dory. The seven hundred feet of the Metropolitian Life Insurance Company's tower glittered like an Alpine summit.

"Oh, yes!" said Diana. "We can be friends." She stood facing Edith uncertainly.

"Then let's let's sit down somewhere and talk." Edith's brown eyes wandered to the coolness of the crowded Square. "I wonder if there's an empty bench over there, and if it'd be very terrible if we sat on it."

She led the way across the street. They passed the bronze, beneficent Farragut of Saint-Gaudens and followed a curving path path toward the Madison Avenue side of the Square,

Koviloor Acadamy
past benches on which sprawled derelicts who, Edith flashingly thought, could not be more dispirited than was she. They found an empty seat facing the Manhattan Club and took it.

"I certainly have been having bad luck," said Edith. "I don't know what's going to happen next."

She had found that for once she must tell another woman of her troubles. Not all of her troubles: even now Edith could not tell the truth about her husband; but she had to find consolation in the statement of at least a few of her difficulties to a member of her own sex. It is an impulse that we attribute to almost all women at all times, whereas it is common to both men and women, occurring only at the height of long fatigue, but then occurring irresistibly. Edith explained her equivocal position as an unpaying inmate of Mame's house; she poured out the history of the invention; for a quarter of an hour she speculated upon the oncoming disaster—and through it all Diana listened with that sad little smile.

"We've been dreadfully poor," said Edith; "We've been so poor that I used to think there couldn't be worse poverty; and now we're going to have worse. We're almost sure to. Our only chance is the Mr Tyrrell I've been telling you about, and he can't or won't invest in the receiver till he can sell some other stocks at a profit. He has to wait for what's called 'a rising market,' Charley says; and I know if the market doesn't rise soon we'll be ruined—absolutely ruined. I don't know what on earth we're going to do."

Diana was sitting with her slim hands clasped on her knees, her eyes fixed on the figure of her titular goddess that tops the tower of Madison Square Garden. The city is under the goddess's feet; she is flying, she is free: Diana Wentworth turned to Edith a face strongly altered from the face of the pseudo-revolutionist that her companion used to know. She was still smiling, but that face was the face of a woman whom life has conquered.

"You have your husband left," she said very quietly. "Nothing really matters so long as you have your husband, and so long as he's glad to have you."

Then Edith understood the meaning of that sad little smile. Her own troubles had blinded her to every sign of troubles in others, but, upon these words, she remembered van Houyz as she had last seen him with Sylvia Tytus.

"Diana," she said, "you don't mean——"

Koviloor Acadamy

Diana nodded. "But there's no use talking about it," she explained.

"It's that Tytus woman?"

"Yes," said Diana softly, "it's that Tytus woman. Nothing really wrong has happened——"

"The ugly, brainless cat!" cried Edith.

"Oh, yes"—Diana wearily conceded it—"I see now that she is brainless, and I wonder why I ever thought she was good-looking; but that doesn't help much, does it? I don't blame her: I know if it hadn't been Sylvia it would have been somebody else." She stood up.

Edith know that Diana was running away; that she would rather run away than talk of this. One word more seemed, however, imperative.

"But you'll divorce him."

"No, I won't divorce him, dear."

"I see. Perhaps you're right; I don't blame you for not wanting to give him up to her."

"Ah"—Diana looked away—"he's already taken. Besides, you see, he's poor: he doesn't want a divorce."

Edith had risen, too. She remembered Diana's declarations of her own "Freedom" and van Houyz's; her praise of Edith's course in the proceedings against Jim; her former scorn of holding a husband to vows that he might want to break. This was not that same Diana who had held such views; but now, somehow, there was nothing humorous in the alteration.

"Anyhow," said Edith, "you ought to use your own freedom: you ought to get square with him that way."

The violet deepened in Diana's eyes.

"Of course," she said, "I could do that, especially as it's me makes the money. Only—well, I don't happen to want to." She smiled again. "I suppose I'm not that type," she added.

Edith walked slowly to the Twenty-third Street subway station. Her thoughts were quoting something that Diana had said:

"Nothing really matters so long as you have your husband, and so long as he's glad to have you."

"I wonder if everybody's not pretending just the way I am," thought Edith. "I wonder if it isn't all a lie."

Koviloor Acadamy

SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

WHEN he came home that evening, Charley wore a more hopeful air than he had worn for many days.

"The market's rising," he said: "it's rising steadily; and I think, from what Tyrrell 'phoned me a little while ago, he's going to come across at last. He 'phoned me from the Gotham to meet him in the lobby there at eight o'clock this evening." Charley looked at his watch. "It's nearly seven now. I got to hustle."

He went out immediately after bolting his dinner, and Mame, bound for her Mrs Hamilton's and then for a meeting of her missionary-society, went out with him. Edith had gone upstairs to the lonely sitting-room when the maid appeared there and announced Tyrrell.

§ 2. He was standing in the antiquated parlour, where Edith was always ashamed to receive him because it seemed so old-fashioned and he and she so out of place in it. He was leaning, as she entered, against the marble mantelpiece, lithe and easy in his evening-clothes, fingering his small moustache.

"But," said Edith, "didn't the maid tell you? Charley's just gone out."

He repeated: "Gone out?"

"Yes: to meet you."

Tyrrell's handsome face was puzzled:

"I thought we were to meet here. Where's he gone?"

"To the Gotham. He said you 'phoned him that you'd be there."

"No, no. I told him I was telephoning *from* the Gotham. I meant to give him to understand that I was coming up here." He laughed a little, and Edith caught herself speculating whether that laugh rang wholly true. "Well," he went on, "if I went after your husband, I should only miss him: by the time I got to the Gotham he'd be sure to be gone. Of course he'll look next at my club for me, but I might miss him there, too. Since I've been so stupid, I suppose the best

Koviloor Acadamy
thing for me to do is to wait here till he comes back. Will you try to put up with me, Mrs Vanaman?"

He was right, and she was not loath to admit it; in spite of the importance of Charley's prospective interview, she was flattered by the guess that this misunderstanding might have been wilful. The business matters were safe enough: they would be attended to on her husband's return. Meantime, it was pleasant to find Tyrrell so obviously contented to sit on a sofa beside her in the old-fashioned parlour and to have him talk to her in a tone that rapidly became more serious than any they had previously adopted in their latterly not infrequent *tête-à-têtes*.

Somehow, with her warm brown eyes on his firm face, she fell again to telling him, if not all that there was to tell about herself, at least more than she was in the habit of telling other people: as much, almost, as she had told Diana that afternoon. Had he been right, on the evening of the elder Vanaman's death, to say that all would turn out well? No, he had not been right. The mood for confidences was still strongly upon her: she pointed out to him, as delicately as she could, the ambiguous position in which the will left her and her husband, and she did not hesitate to hint that she could not bring herself to be really friendly with Charley's sister.

"I've met Miss Vanaman a couple of times," said Tyrrell. "She struck me as being entirely amiable."

"She is," said Edith; "but—you've seen her."

"Well, after all," he submitted, "you have your husband."

There it was again, nearly in Diana's words. Edith thought of Diana's plight. She thought of how that plight and her own had made her wonder whether the entire attitude of the world's married women was not a conspiracy of faith betrayed to delude the world's unmarried. Oddly in contrast, the memory of that picture by Jim, the picture of the tango-dancers, came back to her: the joy of life as he saw it against the drab monotony of life as she must live it in this house. Once more, from this, followed the realisation of all that she had suffered. If this man was to help Charley with money, why should he not help her, as he had once helped her, with a taste of gladness?

She shrugged her graceful shoulders.

"Yes, I have my husband—for the evenings. And even on some of those his business keeps him away."

"Ah, yes, of course."—It was a too ready agreement:

Koviloor Acadamy
to-night Tyrrell seemed less suave than she had ever known him. "And so you're a little lonely?"

"Sometimes; and I hate it!"

"No doubt; only, don't we all have to be more or less lonely? Isn't that the law of life?"

She hesitated scarcely a moment. "For you?" she asked.

"Often I think most of all for me."

"I shouldn't have supposed so," said Edith. She was looking at the floor, which was disfigured by a hideous Brussels carpet, but she shot a brown glance at him.

"You mean," he quickly took her up, "that I console myself?"

Edith resumed her inspection of the carpet.

"I mean," said she, "that I haven't forgotten the first time I saw you, and that then you were consoling yourself so well that you didn't see me."

While she said it, she was wondering what made her say it, telling herself that this man's affairs could be nothing to her. Yet she wanted to know more about them—about him. She wanted to know that she had been mistaken; she wanted to have out with him the discussion that their first meeting had, after all, left magnificently in the air.

"Oh, but I explained all that to you long ago."

"Did you?"

"Of course I did. You can't have forgotten the day we met on Forty-second Street."

He went back to that day and to that conversation. He repeated his part of it. Of the incident at Charley's office he did not say much that was new, but he ended by saying:

"I'm sorry."

"For the stenographer?" she could not forbear inquiring.

"I'm sorry," he repeated. "You understand."

"Oh, I'm sure there was nothing to be sorry for!" She blushed a little and then added: "Was there?"

"There was a great deal, for there was this: that I didn't observe *you*."

"She was a very pretty girl, Mr Tyrrell."

He caught her gaze and held it.

"Do you think," he asked, slowly, "that such things always count?"

"I don't know," said Edith, her colour deepening, "exactly what you mean. I should think that whether they count or not depends on whether you let them count."

Koviloor Acadamy

He seemed truly distressed.

"Really, really, Mrs Vanaman," he said, in a voice that was low and unsteady, "you mustn't think—— A stenographer! I'm not a snob, but neither am I a cad!"

"Then why,"—she met him with a look that went deep—"why do you feel you must explain to me?"

She was feeling now what she had felt before with him: the strange fascination of fascinating him. She had felt it in their dancing when, as his consciousness ruled her body, her body fired his emotions. It was much that he was handsome and beside her; it was more that he was of a grain finer than Charley. She felt the thrill of power over Tyrrell—and, feeling the thrill of power over him, she let him take her hand.

He answered slowly, his eyes on hers:

"I explain it because I'm lonely, too, here in New York, and don't want to lose the friendship of the only really fine woman that has been my friend. Because——"

"Hello!" said Charley.

They both started to see Vanaman entering the room. Tyrrell dropped Edith's hand; he was wholly self-possessed, both Edith, clearly perceiving that Charley was making a doubtful effort at self-control, felt a quick anger against her husband's intrusion.

"You've come just at the end of my experiment in fortune-telling," said Tyrrell, rising. "I find that your wife is to be a rich woman. Where have you been? I thought we were to meet each other here."

Charley's eyes were hot.

"You said the lobby of the Gotham," he corrected.

"Did it sound that way to you?" Tyrrell sauntered back to the mantelpiece. "That's what Mrs Vanaman's been saying. I'm sorry if I gave you a run down there for nothing. I never could make myself understood over a telephone."

Vanaman grunted an indistinguishable reply.

"Edith," he added, "you'd better leave us alone for a little while. We've got to talk business."

Koviloor Acadamy

SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

She left them without a glance at either. She went upstairs, trembling a little from fear of what her husband might do or say to ruin his chances of financial help from Tyrrell, but trembling more from fear of how he might compromise her with the guest.

Then anger came and crowded out her fear. Entering the house noiselessly, dropping into the room as a policeman drops upon a burglar, Charley had no right to put on the uniform of an injured husband. It did occur to her—what was the fact—that Charley's entrance had not been quieter than was its wont, but that her absorption and Tyrrell's was deeper: she dismissed the idea. What was there for him to see? Her guest had been holding her hand. In that there was nothing so dreadful. Men and women held each other's hands, Edith argued, when they danced together. Besides, Tyrrell had given the explanation of fortune-telling, and that should have been sufficient. Whatever the circumstances of his entrance, and whatever he deduced from whatever he saw, Charley should have concealed his suspicions, if suspicions there must be, until he was alone with his wife. Tyrrell certainly would have done that; Jim would not have suspected.

What could Charley be saying now? What, indeed, was he not capable of saying? It might concern her dignity; it was certain to concern her well-being. Edith resolved to try to hear it.

She reached the upper floor and this decision at the same time. She leaned over the star-railing in her endeavour to hear the talk that was going on in the parlour below. It was useless: her ears could detect nothing save an unintelligible murmur of their voices, now antiphonal, now merged; no separate word reached her; even their tones were dulled and made meaningless by a closed door. Nevertheless, she held her strained position until she heard Mame returning from the missionary meeting.

Edith retreated to the sitting-room. Mame had come up

Koviloor Acadamy
the stairs quickly, and, as she stood blinking behind her thick spectacles in the light of the sitting-room lamp, Edith felt the breeze of a dim disapproval emanate from that uncertain figure.

"Is someone in the parlour?" asked Mame.

Edith nodded.

"Who is it?"

"Mr Tyrrell."

"Oh!" Mame took off her hat and sat down. "He's not alone there, is he?"

"Charley's with him."

"I thought it was him Charley went down to the Gotham to meet."

"He did." Edith was annoyed by this mild but persistent examination. "There was some sort of mistake about the engagement, and Mr Tyrrell came up here."

"And Charley came afterward?"

Edith did not reply. She sat down and opened a book.

"And Charley came afterward?" Mame kept it up.

"Yes."

Mame reached for her work-basket from the centre-table on which the lamp stood. She took out some sewing.

"Did he have to wait long?" she asked.

Edith was not reading, but she would not raise her glance from her book.

"Did *who* have to wait long?"

"Well, either of them, dear. If one did, the other did, didn't he? I was thinking of Mr Tyrrell."

"Not very long," said Edith.

Mame sewed for a while in silence, her head bent close to her work.

"Do you know," she said, presently, "I thought when I came in I saw you leaning over the banister."

Edith said nothing, but she felt the blood in her cheeks.

"We had a fine meeting," Mame pursued: "real splendid, it was. Sallie Hamilton made the opening prayer, and I never heard her pray better. The treasurer's report showed we'd made forty-two dollars and thirty-four cents at the bazaar last week." She paused and looked at the ceiling for inspiration. "Or was it forty-two dollars and forty-three cents?"

Edith left decision to the ceiling, and, that refusing information, Mame went on:

"Mrs Colly made a good speech, too. She really near con-

Kovilloor Acadamy
vinced me the home missionary field was almost as important as the foreign one; but she did have to admit a land where everybody's Christians, like ours, can't be quite so important as where everybody's a heathen. And as I said to Mrs Hamilton on the way home, at least we've taught them to wear clothes and that's a great deal."

It was evident that Edith must say something. She had thought of the van Houyz doctrine concerning clothes.

"A great deal," she assented, her eyes on her book. Charley seemed to be keeping Tyrrell a long time. What was it that was happening down there?

"You'd have been interested at the meeting," said Mame.

"Yes," said Edith. (If only Mame had not come back so soon, and if only the eavesdropping had been attempted from the hall instead of from the stairs!)

Mame's vacuous face was turned upon Edith.

"I wish you'd go with me sometimes. It'd been more profitable to-night, for instance, than staying here alone."

Edith shut her book with a bang. She stood up.

"I don't care about such things," she said sharply.

"I know you don't," sighed Mame. "I wish you did."

"And I won't have you hinting about what I've been doing while you were gone."

"Why, Edith——" Mame's mouth opened in amazement.

"I won't! I won't have it!" She turned to the door. "I'm going to bed."

But as she stood there she heard the men come from the parlour into the hall. Then the front door closed on Tyrrell's departure, and Charley came upstairs.

He entered the sitting-room as Edith was leaving it. His brows were contracted, his mouth squared; in his throat a jealous anger was straining almost absurdly.

"Mame," said he, "go to bed. I want to say something to Edith."

Mame's eyes blinked, but she left the room without a word.

§ 2. Husband and wife waited until they heard the sister's footsteps reach the higher regions of the house; they waited until the last sound of her progress had quite died away. Then Edith hurried to speak. To say the first word and capture the rôle of the wronged party is to win the opening skirmish of most domestic battles, and Edith lost no time now.

"You disgrace me!" she declared. Her voice shook, but

Koviloor Acadamy
only with rage; eyes and cheeks were ablaze; her nostrils quivered.

She was momentarily successful. They stood there facing each other, she with her head high, Charley glowering, but baffled.

"Disgrace you?" He could not follow her. "*I* disgrace *you?*"

"Oh, you know well enough what I mean—thinking these things of me and letting Mr Tyrrell see that you think them."

"Did I say a single word?"

"You didn't have to. You looked as solemn as a funeral and as angry as a mad bull. I saw it and he saw it. You needn't think he'll put money in your invention if you keep this up. The idea of you suspecting me like that!"

But there she gave him an opening. He turned on her. His bloodshot eyes were like hot coals, the bags under them were black.

"It was perfectly evident that you were trying to flirt with him. Why shouldn't I suspect you?" His breath came short. "I know what you're thinking," he burst out. "You're making more of your comparisons. I see you making them in your own mind and hiding them there every day—comparing me with Jim!"

Edith's rages were seldom ineffective. Charley had probed her secret. It was a secret of which she herself was scarcely conscious; it was a sore secret because, however often she might think of some good point in Jim, she hated Jim the more that she thought of any virtue in him; but her present husband had found a half truth and had drawn it from that inner self which resents the bringing of its concepts to light. She glared at Charley as a puma glares before it springs. Her bosom rose and fell; her brown eyes launched green rays.

"You invite comparison!" she cried. "You invite it. Jim would never have suspected me like this."

Charley did not quail; his jealousy was too hot. He bent toward her.

"The more fool Jim," he said: "and you and I know that better than anybody."

What they had done to the hurt of each other when they joined together to hurt Jim! The words struck her face first white and then crimson. Whether from the force of the attack, or because she could think of no more potent way of repelling it, Edith started back and collapsed, sobbing, on a sofa.

Koviloor Academy
If she had a mind to faint, Charley would not regard it. He had, and he meant to keep, the upper hand. He merely strode closer and stood threateningly above her.

"If he ever strikes me!" she thought. "Jim never struck me. If this man ever strikes me, I'll leave him: I'll——"

"You forget," he was saying, "that you suspected me, and for the same reason. You made me fire my stenographer. You made me fire Miss Girodet, and now you've got—just a moment, please; don't interrupt—now you've got to drop Bob Tyrrell."

He had beaten. She tried one more attack with that one of her weapons which came readiest to hand: she tried hysterics, but her physical contortions were as ugly to him as her mental had been, and, quite suddenly, she felt the last ounce of her resistance leave her. It would come back again; it would be renewed; but not to-night. To-night all that she wanted was the end of this quarrel. A madness for rest possessed her. The thought of quiet shimmered in her brain as the false vision of a pool shimmers in the brain of a man lost in the desert and perishing for thirst. She would have promised anything for it. She did promise what Charley asked.

"I don't care if I never see or speak to Mr Tyrrell again," she vowed; "and I never will."

"All right," said Charley.

Still sobbing, she got up to go. She hoped that he would not come to bed just yet; but, even at that moment, her sense for the practical painfully asserted itself.

"And then," she continued, with averted face, "if we drop him, where will you get the money that you've got to get? What did you say to him to-night?"

Charley turned away.

"Never you mind about that," he said in a dust-dry echo of his old chuckle. "I'll get the money, all right."

He would pay no further attention to her. He left her on the landing as she went to their bedroom, and, though she sobbed so hard that she was sure he must hear through the door which she immediately closed, he strolled calmly down the stairs.

She knew he was going to the dining-room to compose himself by drinking. She was glad that he did not follow her.

§3. Beneath all his arrogant anger, Charley, as he settled himself beside a bottle in the dining-room, felt something like

Koviloor Acadamy
a reasonable satisfaction with his night's work. He reflected on his recent talk with Tyrrell, and, reflecting on this, he smiled commendation at his ability to manage women. For he now assured himself that Edith's tears had proved she really loved him, and so he concluded that he had merely properly checked her at the start of a little flirtation. He had succeeded in keeping from her what he had said to their guest; he had left her in a healthy state of uncertainty and fear; and yet his talk with Tyrrell had been wholly friendly and resulted in no more than the fixing of a final business appointment for the next day.

It was to this end that Tyrrell had wanted to see him. The Bostonian explained, what he did not wish to say through a telephone, that the stock he wanted to rid himself of would be disposed of at private sale on the morrow to certain officers of a company competing with that which issued the stock. The proceeds would, of course, go into the Vanaman Radio-Receiver Company.

Charley poured himself a fresh drink and smiled at his good fortune. The luck had changed at last. He would beat Jim at the money game—beat him hopelessly—and there was a pleasant irony in the fact that it was Jim's own work, Jim's "Tango," which had given the last spur to Charley's endeavours. They would make him, in the end, one of the richest men in America.

There was no need to worry any more about material matters; nor was there now any need to worry about Edith. Charley had decided that she should be protected from temptation and that, for this reason, Tyrrell should never again enter the Vanaman house; but the inventor intended that these matters should be arranged diplomatically: if the Bostonian ever realised it, he would realise it only after his money had passed into Charley's hands.

For the receiver had now reached the last stage of its trial existence. The next fortnight would, its inventor did not conceal from himself, prove either its success or its inventor's ruin. By the use of the last lies and the last appeals, duns could be kept waiting that much longer, and by the end of that time a corporation must be afloat. Charley had taken the perilous steps. A vast deal of advertising had been done. There were bills, new and old, from the newspapers, and heavier bills from the job-printers, the old long overdue, all clamouring for payment. A single suit for debt, and his

Koviloor Acadamy
entire scheme would come crashing about his head; Tyrrell's help, and he would triumph.—Well, Tyrrell was going to help.

That night, after he had drunk more than was good for him, the successful manager of women and investors went to bed serenely certain; but the next morning there happened something on which he had not counted. He failed to count on it because he did not know his wife.

§ 4. His wife waited nervously for ten o'clock. At ten o'clock she was going to telephone for Tyrrell. It would be perilous to call him before that hour: she knew that men do not like to be brought direct from bed to business, and Tyrrell, who stopped at his club when in New York, never came down to breakfast before ten.

She had been thinking things over. The exhaustion of her quarrel had lessened; she was still tired, but her very physical weariness stirred her to abnormal nervous activity. Money, she knew, she and Charley must have and have immediately: during the past few days she had learned enough of the new company to know that. Charley's ruin would no longer have meant much to her had it not involved her own, but it did involve her own: she was tied to this man to sink or swim. If he sank, she must go down with him; if he swam to affluence—if he swam at all, it would be to affluence—she would probably be no more unhappy than most married women. Tied to him, she had her just claims upon him; without her concurrence, Charley had no right to throw away their common chances of salvation. Jim would not have done such a thing, fool as Jim was—and he was rich and successful now, while she was poor and wretched: if only to show Jim she did not need him, she would save herself and Charley with her. She remembered how she had once resolved that Charley must be more successful than Jim, and that she would make him so: to-day her one desire was to save Charley in order to save herself.

Her husband had gone to his work without a further hint of what he had said to Tyrrell, and Edith was too proud to ask him again. She was satisfied that, if Charley had brought about an open rupture, he could not get the money elsewhere: she had learned the emptiness of his boasting. If, on the other hand, he thought he had smoothed Tyrrell by diplomacy—well, she fancied she knew Tyrrell better than Charley knew him, and she had no faith in Charley's shirt-

Koviloor Acadamy
sleeve diplomacy. A vow wrung from her as her husband had wrung from her that vow never to see or communicate with Tyrrell had no binding power. Besides, and apart from all the demands of material necessity, her former feeling for Tyrrell had now returned in its full force. . . .

It was hard to wait. She watched the clock as eagerly as she had once looked at it when awaiting Charley. The minutes dragged, and Mame was annoying. On most mornings, Edith's sister-in-law was busy directing household matters, but to-day she buzzed about Edith like a persistent fly: she hovered about the sitting-room door. When at last the hall clock struck ten, she came in and sat down. Edith waited for ten minutes more. Then she got up.

"Where are you going?" Mame asked.

Her mild tone angered Edith, who now decided to go to the nearest pay-station and telephone from there; she ought to have thought of that in the first place.

"Out," she said.

"What on earth for?"

"I want to get something." If the woman held her much longer, Tyrrell would have left his club, and there was no telling where to look for him then.

"What do you want to get?" Mame inquired.

"I—some tooth-paste," said Edith.

"I only asked," Mame explained, "because I have to go out in a minute. Why can't I get it for you?"

There was nothing to do but let her go.

She took an interminable time going, but she went at last, and, so soon as the front door closed on her, Edith darted downstairs to the telephone in the hall.

The exchange was slow in making the connection, and, when the club had answered, what seemed an inexcusable time was needed to bring Tyrrell to his end of the wire. There was every reason for hurry: Edith did not waste preliminaries; she directly apologised for her husband's rudeness.

"I hope you didn't much mind. He's all worked up over his invention," she explained, "and he's really not himself." —Why blink facts? She went on: "If he'd only been himself, of course, he wouldn't have been so foolish as to think—what you couldn't help seeing he did think."

"Oh!" Tyrrell's voice sounded dryly in her ears. "So that's it, is it?"

She had made a terrible blunder: she saw it then. Charley

Koviloor Acadamy
had used diplomacy, and his diplomacy had, after all, succeeded. She should have proceeded more slowly, and, before committing herself, found out from Tyrrell exactly what had happened. But it was too late now: she must make the best of matters.

"I was afraid that was it," she answered. "Of course, he didn't say——"

Tyrrell interrupted—she could not remember that he had ever interrupted her before:

"I see; I see. How absurd of him."

"Yes," said Edith, "isn't it?"

"So I suppose you want me, after this, to give you the room that will be better than my company, Mrs Vanaman?"

If only she had been face to face with him, her task would have been easy: his mobile, sympathetic face always invited her confidence and gave her sympathy:

"Oh, not that! I only—I only wanted you to understand."

"I understand perfectly," said Tyrrell.

His voice told her that he did not at all understand. She felt still more strongly the need of his sympathy. After that difficult night and morning, she yearned for it. But a telephone is a far from sympathetic instrument. . . .

"Is that all?" came Tyrrell's voice.

"I don't know," she said, the tears coming to her eyes. "Oh, I'm so unhappy about it. Our—our friendship——"

"I'm sorry, too, said Tyrrell; "but I understand."

"But listen," Edith began: "if you'll only——" Something made her look over her shoulder. With a quick gasp, she hung up the receiver.

Mame Vanaman was standing in the doorway.

§ 5. Thus it happened that, at his office, Charley, at the moment when Tyrrell should have called there to complete their deal, received, instead of a visit, a messenger-borne letter in which the prospective investor curtly regretted that certain reverses on the market made it impossible for him to offer the money required by the Vanaman Receiver for a new lease of life. It was only a few minutes later when, one after the other, the lawyers of three of the receiver's creditors called Charley on the telephone and threatened to enter suit immediately unless at least partial payments were made on their creditors' bills.

Charley crumpled down into the swivel chair before his

Koviloor Acadamy
desk. The blueprints were dancing on the wall, the sounder mocked him from the table. He was alone with ruin.

Automatically, he opened the bottom drawer of his desk, in which he had lately been keeping a bottle of whisky. He brought out the bottle and a glass and started to pour himself a drink. . . .

It was the end. There was nothing more. This was what marrying Jim Trent's wife had brought him to. He had emptied every coffer of resource; pledged his credit thrice over; borrowed the last obtainable cent from his last acquaintance. Mame would do nothing; he knew that; she would stick to his father's advice: she was a fool to do it, but, in the very face of his disaster, she would do it——

He had more than filled the glass, and the whisky was running over on his hand.

He was disgraced and ruined—irretrievably. If only Mame were not a fool, if she could only see her own advantage. . . .

His heedless eye fell on a pigeon-hole in his desk from which a folded grey paper protruded. Spilling the whisky, he drank with a shaking hand.

Then it was that he remembered the power of attorney that his sister had given him. . . .

Koviloor Acadamy

EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER

When Charley came home that evening, he was a frightened and bewildered man: frightened because of what he had done; bewildered because he could not see the course of events that had made its action imperative. There should be no difficulty about keeping Mame in the dark until the thoroughly launched receiver had earned enough money to replace what the brother had misappropriated—if that sum in excess of the misappropriation, still required for the launching, could be secured—but the fact that the misappropriation had been made was hard to bear. There might even be no trouble, after a little further tampering with Mame's fortune, in getting along without Tyrrell's aid, but the fact that Tyrrell had withdrawn was sinister. In the circumstances, the last person Vanaman wanted to talk about was Tyrrell, and yet about Tyrrell, as it chanced, he had almost immediately to talk. The last person he wanted to see was Mame, and yet Mame was the first person he asked for.

"Where's Mame?" he inquired of Edith, who stood as if waiting for him in the upstairs sitting room.

She saw him as a loose, slouching figure, a man with a gaze that became furtive when he spoke to her. He saw a little worn and dowdy—enough dowdy to make him r— even at such a time, how neat she had always seemed when she was the wife of Jim—but still with much of her old prettiness, in her face a strange mixture of triumph, defiance, and timidity.

"She's gone," said Edith.

"Gone?" gasped Charley. It seemed as if his sister might have achieved the impossible: might have learned of what he had done. "What do you mean—'gone'?"

"She's left," said Edith, slowly. "And because she went, the maid and cook went, too. They never did like me any better than Mame did." Her voice sharpened. "And I won't do the housework," she added. "I may as well tell you that right now. I never had to do any housework until you—until—— Jim never made me do any, and I won't do it now."

Koviloor Acadamy

Charley heard only the first words and the mention of the man that somehow still remained his rival.

"Jim!" he nearly shouted. "What do I care about Jim? Where's Mame? That's what I want to know."

"And it's what I'm telling you. She's gone."

"Do you mean to say to me that you've succeeded at last in driving my sister out of her own house?"

Edith was now resolutely calm.

"If you had your rights," she said, "it would be no more her house than yours and mine."

He waved this aside:

"She's gone for good?"

"So she told me."

Charley felt his heart freeze in his breast. If Edith and Mame had quarrelled, then Mame would regard him as on Edith's side, would assume that he was his own sister's enemy. If the quarrel had indeed resulted in Mame's being driven from the house, then Mame would almost certainly search for new allies: she was a woman unable to exist without friends and, in the lightest change of her daily life, must seek a counsellor. The counsellor that, out of her own home, she would be sure to seek was Zoller—Zoller, who had been her father's lawyer; Zoller who was a member of her church; Zoller, who had always suspected Charley and might even now be asking questions about that power of attorney. All the rage went out of Charley; this was no time for rage; this was a time only to save himself from a situation that might end in his apprehension as a thief.

"Good God!" he gasped. "We mustn't let her go! Where'd she go, Edith? I've got to go right after her and bring her back."

Edith supposed that he was merely whining over the departure of a sister whom he now preferred to his wife: "She said she was going to stop for a time at Mrs Hamilton's. I daresay you know the address, for Mrs Hamilton is an officer in one of Mame's church societies." She had spoken coldly. Now her cheeks and her voice warmed together: "But I want you to understand one thing, Charley: you can't bring her back here if I am to stay. I won't live with her any more."

"You won't? You've got to!" Vanaman's mystification overcame him. "In heaven's name, what's happened?" he asked.

Edith had known all along that she would have to tell. It

Koviloor Acadamy
was something to be able to tell it before her sister-in-law had the chance. Her lips parted in a smile that was partly fearful, partly defiant.

"I was worried," she said, "about what happened between you and Mr Tyrrell last night. I was afraid you might antagonise him, so's he wouldn't put his money into the receiver. He wouldn't put it in if nobody smoothed down that embarrassment of last night. You'd made me promise not to see him, so I 'phoned. Well, perhaps you'd made me promise not even to speak to him; but I 'phoned, anyhow. I simply said you were worried by business troubles, by not being able to get the money that would make the sounder make a fortune——"

Charley swore softly, but Edith was proceeding:

"Mame heard me. She'd been hanging around all morning, and she was queer last night when she came in from that missionary meeting, too. She'd gone out on some errand this morning; but she got back a good deal quicker than was natural. I think she did it on purpose; I think she hurried back and sneaked in. I believe she listened. She never liked me; she never once came to see me when we were downtown. I was always sure she was spiteful and jealous of my place in this house. Anyhow, she heard just enough to know I was talking to Mr Tyrrell, and then it turned out that, last night, she'd been listening, too, the way I guessed she had; and she'd heard you tell me not to see him. She said awful things—horrid. She said she wouldn't stay where people did what I'd done—'goings on,' she called it—and so I simply told her I was your wife and I'd stay here as long as you did, whether she liked it or not. Then she packed some of her clothes and left."

Charley sank upon the lounge on which his wife had sunk the night before. He put his face in his hands.

"Good God!" he groaned again.

"What's the matter?" asked Edith. "If you think more of your sister——"

Charley's voice, which came through his fingers, interrupted her.

"Now I know what was wrong with Tyrrell to-day."

"Wrong with him? Was there something wrong?" All of Edith's strength rose to her self-justification. "Then it wasn't what I said to him to-day; it was because I was too obedient to you to say more. Whatever was wrong was wrong because you behaved the way you did last night. None of it would

Koviloor Acadamy

have happened if you hadn't suspected me the way not even Jim—the way nobody ever suspected me before. What *was* wrong?"

Charley raised a face that was haggard with fear. It had shrunken lately, and now the skin hung loosely on his cheeks.

"He's pulled out; he's refused to put up——"

Edith's eyes dilated. She caught her breath.

"He won't give you the money? It was your fault!"

"Not a red cent."

"But why? Don't he say why? Didn't you ask him?"

"I didn't see him: he wrote. He didn't give any real reason. He just said——" Charley fumbled in a breast pocket. He produced Tyrrell's note, soiled and crumpled now. "You can read it for yourself," he concluded.

She snatched it from him and read it at a glance. She tossed it to the table:

"And you didn't try to see him?"

"Anybody can tell from that it'd be no use. So then——"

"It was your fault!"

"Just a moment, please." He would go through with it now: it would be a relief to him to have somebody share this crime and its attendant fear; it would even be a grim satisfaction to see her suffer a little of what he suffered, and it would be only common justice to open her brown eyes to the results of her quarrel with Mame. He rushed on: "So then the lawyers began 'phoning. There was the Stanfield account for two thousand, and the—— Oh, I forget the names and the figures!" He brushed his hand across his aching forehead. "It's about five times more than I ever had at once, anyhow. And they'd have entered suit to-morrow, and that would have ended the sounder for ever. We'd have been down and out, you and me. Well, there was that power of attorney of Mame's." He took a great breath.—"I used it."

Edith's own face whitened. She drew away from him.

"Will—will they find it out?" she whispered.

"I don't know. Here's Mame turned enemy——"

"That wasn't my fault." She passionately justified herself. "You know it wasn't my fault. You oughtn't ever to have brought me here."

"What else could I do? Anyhow, it doesn't matter whose fault it was in the beginning. The point is, I've used her money——"

Koviloor Acadamy
"Well, if she didn't mean you to use it, why did she give you the power of attorney?"

Charley shook his head wearily. "I don't know. I asked her."

"I believe," began Edith, "that even then you thought——"

"I don't know. Perhaps I did. But now——" He stopped. Back in his brain, in the depths of his memory, cluttered over by the business worries, the jealousies, and the debauches of the past weeks, something rang like a bell, sharp and clear. He rose. He looked up, his eyes staring into hers. "Wasn't it you suggested me getting that power of attorney from her?" he demanded. "It *was* you! *Why did you suggest it?*"

For a long moment their glances met, and they probed each other's souls. There was no word said, but there passed between them one of those incandescent flashes of understanding which are so rare between even the happily married. In that flash, as an honest man and wife scarcely ever comprehend each other, Edith comprehended Charley and Charley comprehended her. By doing together this thing which they had done, by acknowledging it to each other and instinctively expressing their willingness to go on with it together, something came back, something was renewed, however temporarily: they were in the same relative positions that they had been in on that night when they definitely began their plot against Jim.

Slowly she advanced to him; slowly she put her arms around his neck, slowly raised her lips to his.

"What if you did take some of her money?" whispered Vanaman's wife. "Your father wasn't himself when he made that last will; he was half out of his mind. You can pay her back; you can pay her back with interest some day. The invention's sure to make money for her—we both know that. If you hadn't the right to use a little of it that way, what will she care when she finds it's been a good investment for her? What does it matter so long as she doesn't know? She needn't ever know. She doesn't suspect. She's not angry with you. Don't worry: we'll fix her. You see her, and then I will, too. Go and see her to-morrow—give me to-night, but go and see her to-morrow morning, early. Don't bring her back, but smooth her down. You can do anything you want with her. You know how easy she is." Edith was propelled by the revival of that forgotten bond of attraction. Her arms tightened: she held him close; as she spoke, her red lips brushed his lips. "The money was half yours by right, Charley—more than half.

Koviloor Acadamy
What made your father make a new will? *Who* made him make it?"

§ 2. He did not answer, but it was, for this hour, as it had been with them both on that morning before the news of the granting of the divorce came to them; as their league against Jim had then brought them together, so their league against Mame—the result, as it seemed to them, of the will to plot together that was born when they conspired against Jim—brought them together now. Fear fell from them, and within them rose, beating at their temples and straining at their throats, the passion which was, after all, the purest emotion that they had in common. They were one again: guilt had once more done for them what marriage could not do.

Koviloor Acadamy

NINETEENTH CHAPTER

DOUBT came at the time when it usually arrives: in the morning. Edith and Charley woke with headaches, for they had drunk a good deal during the night, and showed it.

Edith, through half-opened eyes, saw that her husband, as he stood before the shaving mirror, looked worn and vulgar. His skin was dull; his prominent eyes were bloodshot—as, indeed, they now usually were—and his hair, daily growing thinner and more brittle, showed touches of grey. The rough stubble on his loose cheeks looked like grime, and, as he now sought to remove it, he more than once cut himself with his trembling razor.

Nor was Charley's vision of his wife more edifying. To the end, Edith was always able to simulate her earlier beauty when she had time to prepare the simulation; but, under the cruel light of the morning, she showed plainly her seniority. It flashed through Vanaman's mind that the best of her was what had been Jim's, and he hated Jim the more because of this.

"Suppose she don't let me jolly her," said Charley—"Mame, I mean."

"She will," yawned Edith. She did not want to think of unpleasant things; she wanted to go to sleep again. "Bring her back if you must."

"But suppose I can't fix it," Charley persisted.

"Then it will be your fault," said his wife. She yawned again; but she would have to think of the unpleasant things: she realised that now.

"Aren't you going to get up?" asked Vanaman.

"No," said Edith.

"But what am I going to do about breakfast?"

"What am *I* going to do, Charley? I suppose you can get a cup of coffee on your way over to Mrs Hamilton's. But don't tell Mame you didn't have one here: that'd only please her."

Charley cut himself again and cried out. Nevertheless, he

Koviloor Acadamy
did not then upbraid his wife for slothfulness; she was an important ally, and allies were few. There was a silence, during which each was thinking of how much hung upon the outcome of the projected visit: Charley that perhaps his very liberty depended upon his bringing Mame back and restoring his own influence over her before Zoller's could reassert itself; Edith that between her and absolute ruin there stood only this figure of the vapid sister-in-law whom she had always despised. Presently Edith, who had shut her eyes again, resumed:

"If she doesn't let herself be smoothed down, that's no reason why she should suspect you; but if she does suspect you, perhap we can still bring Mr Tyrrell around."

It was what had been in Charley's mind. He did not like to hear his wife suggest it, but he had been about to suggest it himself. Neither believed the excuse that Tyrrell had offered; both knew that they were not expected to believe it.

"Yes," said Charley, "perhaps we'd better try. If things don't go right with Mame, we'll talk it over when I come home this evening."

As he bent over the bed to kiss her good-bye, he thought that he had never seen her look so old and unattractive. He was about to put their fortunes to the test; this should have been a farewell into which she poured encouragement, into which she poured something of the ardour that had brought them together on the previous night: she looked at him through half-opened eyes and saw in him only the broken and empty shell of a man. It had all left her: that ardour of the night; she could not give him her mouth; she turned her cheek. It had left him, too: he was relieved that she did not give him her mouth.

§ 2. Mame's friend, Mrs Hamilton, lived in an apartment-house on a cross-street, less than half a mile from the Vanamans'. It was one of those apartment-houses which the New Yorker loves: the sort that put their best front to the world and impress the street at whatever cost to the inmates. The front was ornate and costly; the carefully gloomed lobby less expensively mimicked a sober wealth—and the apartments frankly paid the bills.

When Charley had passed through a fragile elevator-cage on the third storey and rung at a thin pine door, he was shown down a dark hallway so narrow that he could not spread his

Koviloor Academy
arms in it. At the end of this, he was left to wait for his sister in a little, five-sided room. This was the parlour of the flat, and it appeared to provide the lessee with a game like the old puzzle, "Pigs-in-Clover," of which the object was to manœuvre the instalment-plan furnitire of an ordinary parlour into the room without spilling any pieces out of the window. The present lessee had won the game.

Charley sat down in a chair of imitation mahogany, Chippendale from Grand Rapids. It audibly protested, but it could bear him now, for, from all over his body, the fat had lately been disappearing, leaving the skin hanging like the silk of a half-inflated balloon. He was close to panic. As he sat there, the fear came to him that perhaps she had already run to Zoller and that Zoller had questioned her and learned enough to suspect the truth. The visitor cursed his delay. What a fool he had been to listen to Edith and let the night pass without intervention! When Mame came in, he got up and kissed her quickly.

"Oh, Charley!" she said.

She wore a cotton dressing-gown, and her hair was in curl-papers. Her vague eyes were red from weeping, and she spoke in the tone she used to employ at her father's bedside.

Her brother attempted another sort of tone. He tried to be jocular and superior and to make light of her presence here.

"Now, then," he said, "what have you children been quarrelling about? Wouldn't Edith give you any of her gumdrops?"

Mame looked at him in a sort of ruminant protest.

"O, Charley," she said, "how can you?" And then she added: "Isn't at awful? My own sister-in-law!"

He was quaking with fear, but he fought to hold his pose. It was something that Mame, as her manner indicated, as yet guessed nothing of his own course; but this did not prove that she had not been to Zoller: Zoller might well, after questioning her, leave her in the dark until he had verified whatever suspicions he had gathered from the full answers she would have given him. But Charley chuckled.

"Tut-tut!" he said. "The thing I think's awful is your not coming right to me instead of running off here to people outside your own family like Mrs Hamilton and Mr Zoller."

Mame's face showed a new light.

"Why, I never thought of Mr Zoller," she said. "If there's

Koviloor Acadamy
got to be any legal arrangement about the house, perhaps it would have been better——"

"Just a moment, please!" Charley could have torn his tongue out: he had actually put the idea into her silly head. "There's no reason for your going to anybody but me: there's every reason why you shouldn't. You know I don't trust Zoller."

"Poppa did."

"Well, no matter if he did: you don't want to make a scandal, do you? You don't want to get any lawyers in on this."

"No," said Mame, "I don't want to make things worse than they have to be; but I wouldn't go to Mr Zoller because he was a lawyer: I'd go to him because he was a friend and a man and knew the law."

The distinction was too fine for Charley.

"I tell you, you don't need anybody that knows the law. What's the law got to do with it?"

"I only thought there might be some sort of legal arrangement——"

Did she mean to give him money enough to live away from her? Twenty-four hours ago he would have hugged her for the offer; to-day, he knew that he must keep her under his influence and that he must prevent any arrangement of her affairs and his which would involve a careful scrutiny of their entire field.

"I don't want any arrangement," he said: "I want you."

Grateful tears came to her eyes. She timidly took his hand.

"That's good of you, Charley. Somehow, I'd begun to think you didn't care any more."

"Of course I care." He patted her shoulder protectingly. "You say you need a friend: well, I'm better than a friend—I'm your brother."

"I know," she answered, "but you're Edith's husband, too; and you remember what the Bible says: 'For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife.' I was reading that last night."

"But you see I'm going to cleave to Edith and you, too," said Charley. "It's all right. You just misunderstood each other, that's all. Now, you get your things together and come right back with me, and we'll explain everything, and everything'll be the way it was before."

Again the tears filled Mame's eyes, but she shook her head.

Koviloor Acadamy

"No, Charley," she said. "I can't go back while Edith's there: I'm sorry, but I can't."

What was the matter with Mame? What had changed her of late from the sister upon whom he could always work his will?

"Mame," he said, "I'm ashamed of you."

"Then," said Mame, "you don't know what happened, and I don't know if I've any right to tell you."

Had Edith lied to him? Had she concealed something? Had she been saying more to Tyrrell than she pretended to have said? Then why had she urged him to come here? Didn't she know Mame would repeat it? Or did she safely count on his sister's sense of duty, which forbade her to make trouble between husband and wife? This whole difficulty was of Edith's making: she had disobeyed him; she broke her promise, she telephoned surreptitiously to Tyrrel just as, when Jim's wife, she used to telephone to Charley. For the minute, he forgot his danger.

"What was it?" he asked.

"I don't know if I ought to tell."

"You oughtn't to do anything *but* tell."

He got it out of her: it was nothing more than Edith had owned to. Then he had the difficulty of explaining that Edith had admitted this; that it was of no importance; that he forgave his wife for conduct toward Tyrrell which was essentially incorrect, and that, Edith being sorry for what she had said to Mame, Mame must forgive her, too.

"If things don't go right with Mame——" he had said to his wife: things did not go tremendously right with Mame. She was amazingly fixed. Charley's future was baulked, his liberty endangered, by her new-born stubbornness, her twisted sense of duty to herself, and the hundred petty details of a long-standing animosity between a sister and her sister-in-law.

Mame wept a good deal, but her tears were no longer soft. Edith, according to her, had been quite as ready with criticism as Mame had been in Edith's version of their earlier differences and final quarrel. His sister, if only for the sake of peace, could not live again with Edith.

"I thought you were a religious woman," Charley sadly upbraided her.

That was, Mame protested, precisely her point. The religious soul has two duties: one to its neighbour and the other to itself; it must have charity and it must have self-respect.

Koviloor Acadamy
Mame, though as a Christian she forgave, could not, as a self-respecting woman, forget. In the former character, she told her brother that she could share belief in Edith's repentance, though she thought the repentance only temporary; in the latter, she declared that she could subject herself to no further insult and that, since he demanded the truth, her brother's wife was, in her opinion, a spouse that he had better separate from at once if he did not want soon to have to divorce her.

Charley's patience left him. He had been ready enough to suspect Edith and to accuse her in the privacy of their own life, but his frayed nerves reacted against these accusations by a third person. Moreover, he did not forget that the present accuser, if his sister, was also the actual inheritor of money he believed by right to be his.

He accordingly lost his temper, and there were more tears and a scene, in the course of which Mame declared that, since her only living relative hated her, she would cut the last strand that bound them and turn the management of her estate over to her father's lawyer. It took a great deal of tact, of which Charley in his best moments had no large supply, to turn the conversation away from such unsisterly threats, and he left Mame only partially pacified. The best that he could get from her, even by appeals to religion and family affection, was a promise to " think things over."

§ 3. He went hopelessly to his hopeless office and passed there a worried day. He telephoned to Edith the result of his interview with Mame.

" You've certainly got me into a mess," he concluded.

" I told you last night it was your own fault," she answered : " you oughtn't ever to have made me live with her."

" And I told you there wasn't anything else I could do."

" Well, what are you going to do *now?* That's the important thing."

He said he thought he would have to await Mame's decision and might meanwhile try, after all, to obtain an interview with Tyrrell.

From the latter course Edith dissuaded him. She said it would look as if he were too anxious.

" Give him another day to think it over in," she advised.

" To-night, if you think it's any use, I'll go around with you to see Mame."

" But she might go to Zoller in the meantime," said Charley.

Koviloor Acadamy

"No, she won't. You know she never hurries. She told you she'd think it over, and Mame thinks slow."

"I wonder," Charley added, "why Zoller never butted in before. He drew the will, and she had to tell him a few things when she turned the estate over to me. I've always wondered about that, but I was afraid I'd only start her to hunting trouble if I asked her."

Over the wire, Edith's voice came more lightly:

"That's where I did you a good turn, anyhow. Mame and I were friends then. I said if she told Zoller that he'd try to take the thing out of your hands because he didn't like you; and I said you needed the fees."

"If she remembers that, it might send her to him now!"

"Oh, she'll never go to law, no matter what she finds out."

"Zoller'd make her," said Charley; "she always does what the person nearest to her tells her to."

He rang off. He took the power of attorney from the desk and, drinking as he read, perused it even more carefully than on the previous afternoon. There was no misunderstanding its phraseology: it gave him the right to check-out Mame's money only for the running expenses of the Vanaman estate; Leishman had drawn it as directed, but Edith had apparently feared to ask Mame for any wider powers.

Charley drank steadily throughout the morning. Nearly all of this money might have been legally his. It was even possible Mame had indeed influenced his father against him: Mame was a little too good to be true. Besides, the receiver was bound to repay, and Tyrrell might still be brought 'round. Charley would give the receiver a full chance. On the old theory that it is as well to hang—if detected—for a sheep as a lamb, he boldly drew another and larger cheque against Mame's fortune and, in the face of all danger, proceeded to put forth his invention on what, forgetting that the money was his sister's involuntary contribution, he described as his own hook.

§ 4. Almost at that instant, Edith was using her own hook, too. She had been left alone in the hideous house of which every room reminded her of her failures. She saw Charley ruined and herself reduced to imploring the charity of Uncle Gregory or returning, if it was permitted her, to the monotony of Ayton. This was what Jim had brought her to. She remembered the dreams of her girlhood and she cried over them. She had not wanted more than other women—she was

Koviloor Acadamy
sure of that—and she had once loved Charley truly and wholly. Now she must pay.

There must be some way out. She remembered Tyrrell: it all would have been well if Mame had not interrupted that explanation to Tyrrell; Edith's misfortune had not been in telephoning him, but in not being permitted to finish telephoning. If she could have made an appointment with him and seen him face to face, she would have saved the situation.

Well, Charley had agreed that it might still be both necessary and possible to bring Bob Tyrrell around. That was what he agreed before he left to persuade Mame. Edith would try it now; she would complete—it was not too late—what marplot Mame had interrupted yesterday. When Charley telephoned, Edith persuaded him against appealing to Tyrrell. Once before he had failed with Tyrrell: now she would succeed.

Her telephone caught the Bostonian at his club.

"I want to see you," she said. "I want you please to take me to lunch somewhere."

Tyrrell agreed, and it was good to hear his voice. She had not realised how good it would be.

Edith made a careful toilette. She wore her best gown, and she took pains about the crayon and rouge. She did not want their work to be evident as theirs, but she wanted to look her best. . . .

§ 5. He had named a quiet restaurant, but an expensive one—conservative, and therefore able to supply champagne. As Edith entered it, she felt the wisdom of his choice; but, when she was seated opposite her pleasant host, she was startled to see, at tables near her, two faces with which she had once been familiar. She did not know what hurt her more: the cold stare with which her bow of recognition was met by that Muriel Carson whom she had liked and respected during her life with Jim and had not seen since the divorce; or the waved hand of Effie Mitchell, who, with her cheeks painted red and her nose powdered violet, greeted Edith across the room as comrade hails comrade. Edith could scarcely eat until Muriel, with a man who must have been her father, and Effie with a youth who might have been her son, left the restaurant.

It was wonderful to look from them to Tyrrell, sitting opposite, polite, decorous, easy, wrapped in the golden [illegible] from the happy doorway that was forbidden her. She [illegible]eiver at him from a glass that had been oftener refilled of to his

Koviloor Acadamy
her glass at any of their other meetings. It was long before, looking at him, she could bring herself to think of the sordid motives that, she still told herself, had prompted her to ask him to bring her here.

"I don't know what you must think of us," she said, when she finally decided that the moment to speak of such things could no longer be postponed.

"Why 'us'?" he asked, his glance full upon hers.

Her eyes lighted with the old feeling of conquest to be gained, but she had the grace to let them drop.

"Why not?" was all she had to say.

They had finished a luncheon chosen with the care and delicacy that such a luncheon deserved, and, over their cordial glasses, were delaying departure. About them, the chatter at the other tables, the noise of dishes and the brass of an orchestra in a balcony almost over their heads, made Edith forget the insult of Muriel Carson's snub and Effie Mitchell's greeting. She felt that now she and this handsome host were as unnoticed as two children at a circus. If one can hide by night in a large city, he can generally hide by noon in a great restaurant, and Tyrrell and Edith, though they did not consider the necessity of being hidden save from the possible jealous gaze of Vanaman, were at last temporarily secure from the interruptions of their own world. Sitting at their ease, they put aside their smiles and lighter talk and drifted, as they used to when alone, to something personal if not intimate.

"I wonder," said Tyrrell, slowly, "if you know what a beautiful woman you are?"

There was perfect sincerity in his voice, and Edith, after her elaborate preparations, was, indeed, looking her best; but she knew the ground to be dangerous. Besides, they had somehow not yet talked of what she had told herself she came here to talk about.

"Don't," she said, and without coquetry. "I'm glad you think so; but—is that all?"

She was searching her soul. Somehow she wondered how much beauty counted; how much it brought her, and how much it might yet bring. She thought of Charley—with no feeling of disloyalty; indeed, with little feeling at all—of Mame, of Aytor[illegible]ry life in the old-fashioned Vanaman home, where remembere[illegible]ce had been so obviously tolerated only because of them. Sh[illegible] relations to her. She thought of what now threatened

Koviloor Acadamy
that house and herself as one of its inmates. She hated her whole drab past and feared her whole dark future; she made a movement as if her shackles were material things and she could shake them from her wrists.

What Tyrrell saw was a pretty gesture of inquiry from a beautiful woman.

"All?" he repeated. "No. You are a very brave and fine woman, too."

"I don't know," she said, honestly. "I try to be brave—but it's hard sometimes, isn't it?"

"It is hard," he answered. "I think we all try. It must be wretched for you in that dismal house."

"You do think it dismal, don't you?" How could he think it anything else, this easy-mannered man of the world whose grave eyes so earnestly studied her?

"Good heavens!" said Tyrrell. "Surely no one ever called it gay!"

They both laughed. Then Edith continued:

"Mame does—or used to."

"You mean the dumpy—— I beg your pardon—the——"

But Edith did not object.

"That's just it," she agreed. "And her mind's somehow dumpy, too." She did not think it necessary to say that Mame was no longer an inmate of the prison

"You don't belong there," he said at length.

"Where do I belong?"

"Well, you belong—here—everywhere where it is bright and happy and merry——"

Edith had been listening with flushed face. Her dreams called her; the door of light called her; the thought that Jim had gained what she so wanted urged her on.

"Yes," she said. "Not that I want it always; but once in a while I *do* belong where there's music and dancing—where people dress well and live well and enjoy life. I've always wanted those things, and somehow I've always just missed them."

There were unshed tears in her brown eyes.

"I think I understand," said Tyrrell quietly, "and I think you'll understand me if I say it's hard luck."

Edith fought back her tears. She smiled.

"Oh, it will come!" she said. "I know it will"—she recalled her errand here—"if Charley ever gets his receiver through, and can give a little time to me instead of to his

Koviloor Acadamy
invention!" She lowered her eyes. "It's that I wanted to talk to you about," she went on. "Charley——"

She stopped: Tyrrell was regarding her with a puzzled smile.

"It seems to me," he said, "that, if we are going to discuss jealousy, *I* might be jealous of *him*."

Edith's glance intensified. She remembered how she and this man had danced together, been one being and moved with one rhythm to music and joy. Her starved heart suddenly cried out in protest against life and in longing for a little joy. If only she had met Tyrrell sooner. If only——

But Charley's invention was what she must now think of, and she brought herself to it.

"I'm sorry he acted the way he did—Charley, I mean," she said. "I shouldn't have telephoned to you yesterday. I only wanted to tell you—to explain—to say he was so excited, and we all know how important it is to get his invention on the market quickly. Everything upsets him now, while he's only waiting, more than it should."

Tyrrell ignored, as completely as Edith, the excuse that he had sent Charley for the withdrawal of support.

"I believe that receiver is a good thing, Mrs Vanaman," he said. "I've looked it over pretty thoroughly. I suppose it is hard to find people to put up capital on chance——"

"It *is* a good investment," said Edith.

"Yes, it's a good investment. I tell you honestly, I would have gone into it if your husband hadn't been——"

"I know," said Edith softly. "But I believe he's over that: really I do. Of course it must have looked a little queer to him, to come into the room and find you holding my hand, even if "—she smiled at memory of their innocent lie—"even if you were only telling my fortune."

Her cheeks were warm with colour. Tyrrell caught her glance and held it, but the waiter, growing impatient, was demanding:

"Anything more, sir?"

"No," said Tyrrell, sharply. "Bring me my bill."

Edith sighed. Did he mean this as a final refusal?

"Don't you think," asked her host, "that we'd better finish our talk at another luncheon—*soon*?"

"Isn't it finished?"

"Do you think it is?"

"I don't know; I——" He had given her no answer; he

Koviloor Acadamy
had left everything in the air—she must know—she must know!

"Well, then, we might continue it, at any rate," said Tyrrell, "some day next week. Say Tuesday."

"You might telephone, of course," suggested Edith.

"Yes, but——"

"Oh, it's perfectly safe at eleven in the morning."—She would not pretend to misunderstand him now.—"I'm always alone then. Besides, you needn't say who you are."

"Well—Tuesday."

"Perhaps." She made a final effort. "But about—about the invention?"

Tyrrell's face was undecided.

"You know how I feel," he said.

"Yes," agreed Edith, with an upward glance, "but if it's a good thing——"

"I'll see," he concluded. He looked at her squarely. "I'll see," he repeated.

There were some things that he did not like to put plainly, even to himself.

Koviloor Acadamy

TWENTIETH CHAPTER

As soon, that evening, as Charley's latch-key sounded in the door of the Vanaman house, Edith hurried into the vestibule to meet him. He had left his office somewhat earlier than usual because, after the strain of the second robbery of Mame's estate, he had felt the need of a further stimulant, and the supply in his desk he had exhausted by mid-afternoon. He had remained downtown drinking until the hour at which he customarily returned home; but he was not drunk: in the present state of his nerves, a good deal of liquor was required to conquer him. He was, rather, more than commonly susceptible to impressions, and he now at once saw by his wife's face that something had gone wrong.

"What's the matter?" he demanded.

Edith closed the door of the vestibule behind her.

"Where on earth have you been?" she whispered.

"At my office. Where'd you suppose?"

"Well, you weren't there about half an hour ago. Somebody went to see you, and you weren't there. The people in the next office said they thought you'd gone home. So he came up here. He's here now. He just came in. He's in the parlour."

Her voice shook. It frightened Vanaman.

"What are you talking about?" he asked. "Who's here?"

"Mr Zoller."

"Zoller?" Charley stupidly repeated. "Mame's lawyer? What does he want?"

"I don't know. I told you he's only just got here. I can't guess. He won't say anything to me, and I don't dare ask.—I thought you told me Mame wouldn't do anything till she'd mulled it all over in her own mind."

"That's what she promised," said Charley. He leaned against the wall of the vestibule, panting. "O Lord!" he said.

Edith dragged at his hand.

"You can't stay here," she urged. "You've got to go in. The longer we wait, the queerer it will look to him."

Koviloor Acadamy
Charley passed a trembling hand across his eyes.

"I can't go in," he muttered.

But Edith dragged at him.

"You must. You've got to. Come on. Do you want to ruin us? Come on into the dining-room first and have a drink to steady your nerves."

He struggled. "You'll go along? You'll back me up?" He was pitiful.

This, she bitterly reflected, was the man she had to count on: this was what Jim had left her. Well, somehow she must pull him through.

"Yes, yes," she said; "I'll come along; I'll back you up. Only, hurry, hurry!"

She led him softly into the dining-room. She poured him a large drink, and herself one, the bottle clanging nervously against the glass as she poured.

"Come on now," she said. "And just remember not to admit anything—anything!"

He stood with the empty glass in his hand, looking at her. Suddenly he collapsed into a seat and bent his head to the dining-table.

She ran to him and tried to lift his head; but he held it down.

"Come on!" she whispered.

"I can't," he groaned. . . . "I'm afraid."

Edith pulled at his shoulders. She ground her teeth. He would not budge.

"You coward!" she said.

"Oh, it's easy enough for *you* to talk," said her husband: "you get the money if I win, and if I lose you're just where you were. It's not you that goes to—goes to——"

"Jail!" she concluded for him. "Why don't you say it?" She shook him and his head bobbed until it beat the table so noisily that she feared Zoller, in the next room, might hear.

Charley turned on her.

"It was you got me into this," he said. "You put me up to it. You got Mame to give me that damned power-of-attorney."

"If you'll only brace up and listen to me," Edith whispered, "I'll get you out. What are you afraid of? What can he know—*yet*? But the longer you keep him waiting, the more he'll suspect."

She was afraid to give Charley another drink, and yet she

Kovilloor Academy
was more afraid not to. She refilled his glass, and he gulped its contents.

Slowly a little colour came into his cheeks. He stood up.

"You're right, Edith," he said. "That guy's a bluff. He can't know anything yet. I like his nerve, coming here——"

"Yes, yes," she urged, plucking at his sleeve. She knew that his new courage was a false one, but she must use it before it vanished. "Come on."

She half pushed, half dragged him into the old-fashioned parlour.

§ 2. Mr Zoller was seated on the extreme edge of the stiffest of all the room's stiff chairs. His dry little body was erect, his mouth closed like a sprung trap. He rose slowly as Charley and Edith entered.

Edith was trembling for the results of her stratagem; her eyes were on her husband. Charley was tryingto hide his terror under a boisterous front.

"How d'you do, Zoller?" Charley began, with all the appearance of heartiness he could muster. "Sorry I missed you downtown. One of the big telegraph companies called me unexpectedly into conference about my receiver. They're going to take——"

The words died away on his lips. Mr Zoller had not seemed to see the unsteady hand that Charley extended. Vanaman was glad that the parlour was darkened and that Edith was now beside him.

"Just so," said Mr Zoller. "Glad to hear it, I'm sure. Glad to hear your father's apprehensions about that invention were unfounded." His cold eye looked quickly at Edith and back to Charley. "I wanted a word with you in private, Mr Vanaman," he said: he used to call Charley by his first name.

There was no need for Charley to bluster, but bluster he did, and Edith felt that he was dangerously overplaying his part. His unnecessary heartiness had been patently exaggerated. Edith knew that Zoller must see this and guess what it hid. She was sure her husband was working his false courage too hard, and at this rate it must soon give way.

"I haven't any secrets from my wife," Charley declared.

Mr Zoller's smile was sour.

"Then Mrs Vanaman is a fortunate wife," said he. "I rather thought that you had no secrets from her; but, as this is a matter of business——"

Koviloor Academy
"That makes no difference," said Charley.

"Very well, Mr Vanaman. If that is your feeling, very well." Without being asked to do so, Zoller resumed his stiff seat, whereat Charley and Edith, unconsciously gripping hands, took places on the sofa opposite him. "I come from your sister," continued the lawyer.

Charley was about to say that he had supposed as much, but Edith intervened:

"From Mame?" Her tone was one of innocent surprise.

"Exactly, Mrs Vanaman: from Miss Vanaman, whose trustee you, Mr Vanaman, I believe are."

"Why——" began Edith.

But Charley cut her short. The liquor burned in his veins and surged to his head. He had been dragged to this interview, and he was now determined to go through it in his own way.

"Just a moment, dear," he said.—He glared at Zoller. "Of course I'm Mame's trustee. You know that as well as I do. If—— Just a moment, I say, dear.—If my sister wanted to ask anything about the estate, why couldn't she come herself?"

Zoller looked him steadily in the eye.

"I thought that was a question I had better not put to her," said the lawyer. "I wanted to ask it, but she expressed a desire to place the matter in my hands."

"Why," murmured Edith, "I'm rather surprised at Mame. I know she and I had a little quarrel—just the merest quarrel—but I didn't think——"

"Just so, just so," Zoller interrupted. "I could have written, Mr Vanaman, but having been your father's attorney, I thought I had better call. Your sister wants an accounting of the management of her estate."

Charley's face went very white, Edith's tightened. Except that their clasped hands gripped each other closer, neither moved. The expected bomb had exploded, but, expected though it had been, Charley knew of no way to meet it save by a counter explosion. Edith saw this coming, knew in a flash that there was now no danger of his collapse—that the danger was the antithesis of collapse—tried to interfere, and was howled down. Disregarding more violently than before his wife's efforts to restrain him to quieter methods, Charley sprang to his feet.

"What!" he bellowed. "An accounting? My sister asks her own brother for an accounting?"

Koviloor Acadamy
Zoller was painfully unimpressed.

"You have caught my meaning exactly," said he.

"Charley——" Edith tried to interpose.

Charley did not heed. He was resolved to try again. He had worked himself into a genuinely righteous indignation.

"Just a moment, Edith," he once more said. "My sister!" he cried, turning upon the unresponsive lawyer. "My own sister! And she sends her attorney to do it for her! How dare she treat her only brother this way? And how dare you, Zoller—my father's friend: a fine friend you are!—how dare you permit her to do so?"

Zoller sat bolt upright and unflinching.

"I take my client's instructions," he placidly answered.

"Her instructions! Her insults to your old friend's son, you mean!"

"As you please, Mr Vanaman. It is not uncommon for the beneficiary of an estate to want to know what has become of that estate—not at all uncommon, I assure you."

"Don't try to be funny, Zoller. This is a serious business. And it *is* uncommon to ask an accounting so soon. I'm not sure whether she has the right to an accounting so soon. I tell you——"

"Mr Vanaman," said the lawyer simply, "she has. And, if all is as it should be, there is no reason why you should think it serious."

"Do you mean to charge me——" Charley's cheeks were now purple. He levelled a shaking finger at his tormentor.

"Charley!" his wife admonished.

"I do not charge anything," said the quiet Zoller. "Before you spoke, I could not have suspected anything. It was you who said this was a serious business. If all is *not* as it should be, you can't exaggerate its seriousness, Mr Vanaman."

"Zoller——"

Edith got up and put her hand on her husband's arm. Her hand was shaking, but, when she spoke, her voice was low and calm.

"I'm sure, Mr Zoller," she said, "that Charley wouldn't hurt his sister's feelings for the world. Except for me, there's nobody he loves as much as he loves Mame. No wonder he's hurt, Mr Zoller. I can't understand business, and so I don't know just what all this means; but I can tell somebody has been putting terrible thoughts against her brother into poor Mame's head, and——"

Koviloor Acadamy

"I'll go and see her myself!" broke in Vanaman.

"I think not," said Zoller quietly. His cold eyes did not so much as wink. "I had hoped you would take this in the proper spirit; but from the way you have taken it, I am sure I shall be justified in going to her at once, and, as a duty to a client, informing her of my suspicions and instructing her not to see you."

"Mr Zoller!" pleaded Edith.

"Leave this house!" blustered Charley. His desire to be impressive raised him to the vocabulary of his prospectuses: "This interview must terminate. Leave my house this instant!"

The lawyer bowed. He got up slowly and stood erect.

"As you ought to be quite well aware, the terms of your trusteeship provide," he said with a slow clarity, "that an accounting may be demanded and must be provided at any time and without notice; but my client is disposed to be generous. She will give you ten days. In ten days from date, therefore, we shall expect your figures. In the meantime, I have no objection to leaving your sister's house."

He went out without listening to Edith's endeavours to undo something of what had been done.

§ 3. Husband and wife stood confronting each other in a fear that began by expressing itself in mutual recriminations. As soon as the front door closed, Edith turned on Charley. As if it had been a paper mask, all the gentle innocence that Zoller had seen was torn from her face. Her face was that of a vindictive savage.

"Now you've done it!" she cried. "You *must* brag! You *must* try and bully him! You made him suspect—and now you've probably bragged and bullied yourself into jail!"

Charley's look mirrored hers:

"He suspected all along. He suspected because Mame did—and you know what got Mame down on us; you set her against us: you did! She's the easiest woman in the world to get along with; but you set her against us by never being decent to her, fighting with her, and telephoning to Tyrrell when I'd told you to keep away from him!"

"You forget one thing," said the wife: "you forget that you gave the cause for suspicion. If you hadn't cheated your own sister, there'd have been nothing to suspect you of."

"Who suggested me getting the power-of-attorney?"

Koviloor Acadamy
"Oh, I did, but I didn't think I'd got it for a fool. Yes, that's what I said: a fool! You not only stole—you did it in such a way that you were sure to be found out sooner or later, anyhow."

"Stop that!" Charley raised his clenched fist as if it grasped a weapon.

"I won't," said Edith. "I tell you, if you ever lay your hand on me I'll leave you forever—leave you to brag yourself into jail. I said you were a fool and you are a fool. Even now you're a fool. You're wasting time accusing your wife when you ought to be telephoning to Mame to come out and meet you, so as to get her away from Mrs Hamilton's before this Zoller gets there."

She was right about that. Charley darted to the telephone in the hall. She heard him tear the leaves of the telephone-directory, rattle at the hook, and swear at the exchange for what he took to be its tardiness. She heard him saying:

"I want to talk to Miss Vanaman. . . .

"Yes, Miss Mame Vanaman. . . .

"Never mind who it is. I want to talk to her. . . .

"What?" . . .

"Why not? . . .

"Well, then, it's her brother; it's Mr Charles Vanaman. . . .

"*What?* . . .

"But I tell you I'm her brother. I—— Here, Central's cut in. Hello, hello, hello, Central! What the hell do you mean cutting in on me when. . . .

"What's that? *They rang off?*"

He staggered back to Edith. His anger was gone; there was only a helpless terror in his staring eyes.

"She won't talk to me," he gasped. "That woman—it must have been Mrs Hamilton; I don't know who it was—says Mame's got instructions from Zoller. He must have 'phoned from the corner drug-store as soon as he left here." A last flicker of enmity flamed in his voice. "Whoever was talking to me said *you* made things the way they are; so, you see, it *was* you excited her suspicions. It seems to be your nature to excite 'em."

"Suspicions!" Edith echoed. "Nothing wrong had happened when I quarrelled with her. Suspicions! I'm sick of that word. I never once heard it from Jim, and since I've been with you I've hardly ever heard any other. Suspicion seems to run in your lovely family. If you hadn't had sus-

Koviloor Acadamy
picions you'd never have lost Tyrrell—you'd have all the money you needed now."

Charley's face changed. Tyrrell meant escape. Tyrrell meant the only possible means of escape. Mame was under Zoller's thumb, and Zoller intended—oh, Charley knew he intended—to send Charles Vanaman to jail. The hunted man forgot all else that his wife had said; he caught her hands; he was shaken by a paroxysm of tears.

"Oh, Edith," he sobbed, "we've *got* to have this money; it's jail for me if I don't get it, and I *do* love you, and there's nobody to get it from but Tyrrell. I *do* love you; before God, I *do* love you! We've got only ten days, and in that little time we can't find money anywhere but from Tyrrell. We *must* bring him back! *Can't* we bring him back? Can't—can't *you,* dear?"

He hung upon her answer. Edith listened with impassive face; she was thinking of Tyrrell's last words to her in the restaurant.

"Perhaps I can," she said. Oddly enough, "The Tango Dancers," Jim's picture, swam into her memory.

"Try!" Charley implored. "Please, please try, for my sake. If you have to, you may flirt with him—just a little, you know. I won't be jealous any more, dear. I'm sorry I was. Forgive me! Do try—do, do try. For God's sake, Edith—for mine! You can do it, if you'll only try."

She heard him, and she thought that she understood. She was sorry for him; she was disgusted; she was elated.

"You're sure you won't be jealous?"

"No, no, no!" vowed Vanaman.

"Well, then, I'll try," said Vanaman's wife.

Koviloor Acadamy

TWENTY-FIRST CHAPTER

He had only ten days—ten days in which to do the thing he had been trying to do for months in vain.

This time, moreover, the thing was final: there was to be no higgling; the issue would be decisive. He had come to his last resource—and that was Edith.

The discovery had come to him quite simply; it had appeared to him on the crest of that crisis after Zoller had left husband and wife together. The lawyer opened the floodgates of disaster upon his client's brother. To Charley, sputtering and struggling in the onrush of those waters, this means of safety had presented itself, bobbing on the waves, and he clutched at it with no more surprise and no more debate than a drowning man has for a life-belt: Vanaman thought as much of questioning its ethics or its effects upon his pride as the drowning man thinks of questioning the patent rights of the manufactures of the life-preserver. It was the next day when he began to think of these things: the next day, when he had his arms through the belt and fancied he could already feel the tug at the rope that was to drag him ashore.

Then he had his first moment for reflection, and his first reflection was this: that he, a man, had cried out for help from a woman. The voice of tradition led all other voices; his early conventions were the first forces to awaken in his stunned consciousness.

He brought a fresh bottle of whisky into his office, over which to consider this. He locked the door against callers. He reflected bitterly that nobody of importance would be likely to call, but he added that duns were plenty, and he did not want to be disturbed; so he put a card on the door, saying that he would be absent until two o'clock in the afternoon. Then he sat down, among the blueprints and the prospectuses, and took a long drink.

He was seeking rescue from a woman. Well, why not? That woman was his wife; he had housed and clothed and fed her: he had a right to expect some return. If he hadn't

Koviloor Acadamy
married her, where would she be now? There was something that ought to gall him more than the mere fact of her womanhood: it was that his one help was a woman that Jim had cast off. He fought with this reflection until his shame conquered it. What matter whence the aid came, so long as it was efficacious? It was not for him to citicise its origins. Suppose she had, that night of the dinner at the Delevingne, flirted a bit with Tyrrell, and again the other evening: it was a lucky thing for him, for her husband, that she had.

He drank and grew repentant. It was low of him to think of her as he had been thinking. He was being saved by the woman he had suspected and upbraided. Edith forgave him; she was a fine woman; she was forgetting all the evil he had done her and was coming nobly to his help.

But the means he had asked her to use? He had asked her, in almost so many words—— He wouldn't think about it. His position was one in which choice was impossible. He had to take what he could get and be thankful. Women did this sort of thing all the time; New York was full of it; and their husbands let them amuse themselves. It was not so bad as the flagrant tangoing that the town was full of. It wasn't as if she were going too far, as if she were doing it without his knowledge. It wasn't as if she were doing it for its own sake——

He caught himself up on that. Was she doing it only for him? If she were doing it only to save the situation, she was doing it to save herself as well as him. He had told her that her position would be unchanged, though he might go to jail; but he knew it was not true, and Edith also must know it. He was soothing his wounded conventions by saying that it was proper for a man to call for rescue from his wife; but it was precisely because Edith was his wife that Charley could doubt the unselfishness of her motives: his financial ruin would be hers. Of course she was willing. . . .

The more he drank and reflected, the more willing she seemed. She seemed almost too willing. That question—"You're sure you won't be jealous?"—was disconcerting. How did he know what desires had prompted it? Desires? They might be intentions. Now that he came to think of it, why had he assumed that, where he had lost, she could win? What was it made him so sure—for he was sure—of her influence with Tyrrell? As a child fingers a sore tooth that he knows it will hurt him to finger, Charley played with this

Koviloor Acadamy
idea. He began to remember a hundred careless words of Edith's hints and gestures that were really innocent; to torment into malignant meanings unguarded expressions that he had seen pass over her face. Saving him? Yes, she might be saving him, but at what price? She had tricked one husband already.

Yet he must be saved. He thought of Zoller's dry, hard features and piercing eyes, and wriggled in his chair. Zoller was the kind of man from whom no mercy, Charley was sure, could be expected. Already, Zoller more than suspected. Zoller had Mame under his thumb. Charley saw the courtroom, the jury—he saw the jail. He must be saved, and there was only one way. . . .

He would watch Edith. He would be diplomatic. She would not know; but he would watch her. He must be saved; but there was just one thing he wouldn't stand—at least, not if he could help it, and not one second after the danger was past.

§ 2. Charley watched and waited, torn by the pangs of that jealousy which he had promised to avoid, and racked by fears lest the plan which caused his jealousy should fail. Of his scant ten days of grace, one day passed. Then two and three. At first, he asked her no questions, because he could not trust his tongue, and Edith told him nothing. Was she playing with him? Was she in earnest with Tyrrell? Was she going too far and too fast? Was she going far and fast enough? When he at last ventured to seek reports from her, he got them, but there were scores of clamouring inquiries that he dared not make.

He contemplated going to Mame, confessing everything, and throwing himself upon her sisterly mercy. He tried again and again to get to her, with one plea or another, but he could not reach her. She refused to answer the telephone, though he rang it at all hours. He went to Mrs Hamilton's, but the maid brought back word that his sister would see nobody.

§ 3. As for Edith, she questioned not at all. She would not hurry Tyrrell, who seemed loath to hurry, but she would be in time; she would save Charley, and then—— Well, it was enough for her now that the door was again opened; that although she had still to return to the shadows after each visit

Koviloor Acadamy
in the light, those visits were free and frequent; it was enough to give herself once more to the lure of the music, the magic of the dancing, the thrill of Tyrrell's arm about her waist, of his body moving closely and harmoniously with hers, of his will ruling her will.

She would remember his conversation in the restaurant when she had been cut by Muriel Carson and hailed by Effie Mitchell, the conversation in which he had so nearly, and yet so differently, taken the position that Mertcheson had taken, and she would try to gauge the value of his feelings toward her. Tyrrell had always been much more than her match at talk—that was one of his strongest charms for her—and now she wondered, more seriously than ever before, how much of sincerity, of abiding sincerity, underlay his words. If there was all sincerity, she must use it; if there was little, she must create more; if there was none, she must lose. Weighing Tyrrell's heart, she came to know the full measure of her own; she was aware of a purpose against which her remnant of conscience rebelled, but she tried to quiet her conscience by saying that she was acting at Charley's orders, that she would save her husband before seeking through another man what she had sought and failed to find through Charley. She would persuade Tyrrell to help Charley, for nothing if possible, for everything if necessary, and then, once Charley was safe——

She did not contemplate leaving him; something in her, something imperious, demanded of her a warped loyalty and confidently now assumed in him a loyalty unwarped. She had left Jim, but she must not leave Charley. Much as she disliked him, she must not leave him. She could not. When she had tied herself to Charley in order to get rid of Jim, she had used a knot stronger, she realised, than marriage. There seemed now only one thing that could break it: a blow. Once she had thought that she might almost have respected Jim had he ever spruck her: she knew that if Charley ever struck her, she would leave him.

During the brief hours that she had with him, she would sit regarding her husband in a quiet speculation. She no longer concealed from herself the truth that she was in love with Tyrrell.

§ 4. The game that she played approached its decisive moment on the fourth day of Charley's respite. She had pointed out to him the need of investing something in the

Koviloor Acadamy
endeavour, of making the last play. They must have a quiet that could not be had in the public dining-room of a restaurant, they ought to have the appeal of an intimate family atmosphere that could not be had in any such restaurant's private rooms: Mame's bank-account was again drawn upon; temporary servants were engaged, and Tyrell was asked to luncheon at their own home.

Charley returned excitedly from his office on the night before this luncheon. He was smiling with a new hope.

"It never rains but it pours," he said. "I've got another chance—and it makes Tyrrell look like a piker."

Edith's face showed disappointment, but her disappointment was groundless: Charley had learned something of caution; he would not throw over a certainty for an uncertainty; the luncheon was to begin as they had planned it, the husband arriving late, in order that she might have a free opportunity to make her appeal to their guest. The only change would be in the time of Charley's departure: he must leave early. It was not to be told Tyrrell until after he had either given his support or definitely declined to give it, but the fact was that a stroke of unaccountable good luck had granted Charley permission to interview, on the following afternoon, one of the most important officers of one of the two great telegraph companies: somehow the yards of red tape that enveloped it had been unwound from a letter Charley had written weeks ago, and a second vice-president, having other business that brought him from seashore to town for a few hours, consented to talk to Vanaman for fifteen minutes. . . .

§ 5. Tyrrell was on time. He had his accustomed self-possession; he looked even more at ease, more removed from Edith's own world, than usual, and he showed no surprise when told that business would detain his host. She was inclined to believe it was only her own sense of the impending crisis that made her feel beneath his lighter talk for a sense of finality corresponding to her own.

She thought that, this time, she managed the conversation. Sitting close to Tyrrell, she directed their words to Charley; she sketched, rather deftly, Vanaman in the character of a husband, not loved perhaps, but pitied, whose wife must suffer through his continued poverty. Then she said, boldly:

"If you'd really understood how things were with us, you wouldn't have had that hard luck on the stock exchange."

Koviloor Acadamy

She said it so boldly that even Tyrrell did not at once follow her:

"That hard luck?"

"Yes: the hard luck you told him made it impossible to back the receiver the way you'd hoped to do—the way you'd promised. You wouldn't have had it."

He followed her now; he passed her:

"Luck goes by favour—like some other things."

"Your luck goes by your own favour. You told me you might reconsider yours. You told me that the other day at luncheon. Do you remember? Have you reconsidered? There's no use my pretending it won't mean a lot to Charley if you have—and to me."

Tyrrell bent toward her.

"If I do this," he said, quietly, "I won't be doing it for—him."

She blushed as vividly as ever she had blushed in Ayton. She was proud because of the evidence of her coming success in securing the money, and proud because that success was to be won entirely by her own charms.

"No," she said; "I suppose it will be because you believe in the receiver."

Tyrrell shook his head. "Not even that. In fact, I've been looking into the telegraphic situation, and I'm not sure—— But, no, the only reason that I'd do it would be—for you."

She looked up at him. Her lips were parted; her breast visibly rose and fell.

"You mean——" she began.

"I mean I don't want to see you unhappy," he answered; "I mean I don't want to see your husband ruined financially; but I mean that, apart from the ruin, I don't care two straws what happens to him. I'll do this thing, but—I shall want you."

He took her hand as he had taken it on the night when Charley had interrupted them. He put it to his lips. She saw him tremble as he leaned farther toward her. His ease left him; his voice was broken, his tone low:

"I can't help telling you, Edith, I've got to tell you. I see what your life's been here: it's too glaring not to be seen. And I see tremendously what it ought to be and what—what it *must* be. I'll do this thing. I'll do it for you. I won't say I'll want my reward, but I will say I want you. I want you;

Koviloor Acadamy
but I want you because——" He stopped. He took her other hand. He looked away. "Because I love you," he said.

Her heart hammered in her throat. He did love her: this man, who stood for all she desired in life, who possessed what a man of Charley's sort never could possess. Without hurting Charley, even by helping Charley, who must care more for his invention than for her——

With a premonitory clattering at the lock, Charley came in by the front door. He came in noisily and slowly and found them seated far apart. He kissed his wife's offered cheek and shook hands with his guest.

"Hello, Tyrrell!" he said. "Sorry I was late. Business, you know. And business is going to take me away as soon as the feed's over. I only wish it was paying business." . . .

When they went into the dining-room Charley went first, and Edith caught Tyrrell's hand and pressed it. That pressure seemed a promise, and before the luncheon had ended, one of Tyrrell's cheques was in Charley's wallet next to Charley's heart.

Koviloor Acadamy

TWENTY-SECOND CHAPTER

NOTHING that Charley Vanaman had in all his life been called upon to do was harder than the thing he had to do this afternoon. The money Tyrrell had given was referred to by its donor as "just enough for a preliminary canter"; more, it was to be supposed, would follow if the preliminary canter gave satisfactory results; but this initial sum would not much more than cover the peculations from Mame.

Her accounts could now easily enough be straightened out, and Charley was saved from Zoller; but the position of the invention was really little better than it had been before. There were other debtors still pressing; there was not the money required for an independent start. Should Tyrrell later make inquiries, it would be possible to pretend such a start and to say that the result had been a failure—so that Tyrrell would not press as Zoller had done—but the receiver and its maker would be penniless.

Charley must take up again, at the appointed interview with that portentous second vice-president, the dreary task of wooing the established radio companies. This interview was the most sanguine chance that had come to him for a long time; only yesterday it had seemed most hopeful; but to-day he wondered whether it would come to anything, after all. If it did, he could show Tyrrell a clean account, and they would both earn a fortune; if it did not, then, though Tyrrell could be convinced that his loss was unavoidable, Charley would be a pauper.

The moment Tyrrell's money was in Charley's pocket, the distressed inventor vanished and the jealous husband reappeared. He must leave the luncheon early, must leave Tyrrell and Edith together—and he had, on entering the parlour, seen his wife looking into Tyrrell's eyes with eyes that Charley understood to be playing well the game he had set her to play. Entirely too well: he must go away when it was impossible for him to explain Edith's attitude on the mere hypothesis that she was flirting with Tyrrell for her husband's sake.

Koviloor Acadamy

"Once he'd signed this cheque, he acted as if he'd bought her with it," brooded Charley; "and she acted as if she liked being bought."

As he was rushed downtown in the stifling subway, that idea loomed larger and larger in his mind. He had told her that she might flirt—"a little"—if she found flirtation the only means of capture, but he had meant the verb "to flirt" to be interpreted in its narrowest sense. He had never meant anything more; he swore that he never had, and Edith must know it. Yet Tyrrell's face was the face of a man that has been given at least a promise, and although it might be well that the Bostonian thought he was making a purchase, that Edith should fall in with this view—and probably as a ready chattel—was intolerable.

He added to his mistrust of his wife a hatred for Tyrrell. In spite of what there had indeed been for him to observe, it was a blind hatred, and in spite of all the reasons that there might be for a reasonable hatred, it was reasonless. It transcended right and reason, as the most effective love and hatred always do. It was the instinctive rage of the rude for the suave, of the ignorant for the knowing, of the man that, having set out to trick another, begins to suspect the other of turning the trick.

His jealousy rushed back upon him. He was at least safe from Zoller; there was no fear of jail to dam the onrush, no demand of expediency to block the way. Love, in its first sense, had long ago left him; it had retreated and returned, never once coming back with quite the force of the previous time, disappearing at last completely and leaving behind it only the passionate counterfeit, which itself ebbed and flowed, and always retreated farther than it advanced, until it retreated for ever.

That is love's one way of going. Charley's love had been swept back by the lies bred from his first clandestine relationship and by the poverty, the disappointment, and the alcoholism consequent on that. What remained was his conventional pride as a husband—the shapeless something that men of his training call "honour"—which is tenderer than love, more easily hurt, alert to press into its own bosom every sword.

He writhed in his seat in the subway train. It might be bad policy to drink before keeping his appointment with the radio company's official, but he had to drink. At the station from which he was to issue to the street, he sought the toilet-room

Koviloor Acadamy
and then drank from his big pocket-flask: the liquor that he took to strengthen his resistance reinforced his jealousy.

To think that, a few brief days ago, he had suffered at the thought of seeking aid from a woman! That error was merely one of tactics. He had imagined himself using Edith, and all the while she was using him. His vanity quivered. He should have seen from the first—he, who thought he could manage men and women—that, at best, she was trying only to save herself. "You're sure you won't be jealous?" He invested those words with a tone to fit his mood. Saving him with herself? A lot she cared about saving him! She loved this other man: he sneered at his use of the word "love" in such a connection. She was using Charley's misfortune—the misfortune into which she had led him—to hook Tyrrell, and, once Tyrrell was hooked, she would toss her husband away.

"What a mess I've got into!" Charley groaned.

How had he got into it—how except through his wife? If he had never joined Edith in that conspiracy to cheat Jim at law, old man Vanaman's money would have gone mostly to old man Vanaman's son. There would have been no need to steal from Mame, no need to truckle to Tyrrell. With a burst of fresh hatred for his wife, Charley declared in his own heart that, by teaching him to help in the cheating of Jim, she had taught him dishonesty, that through the conspiracy against her first husband, she had wrought the moral ruin of her second.

"And now," he concluded, "she's going to do what I ought to have known from the first she'd do. I ought to have known it when I was fool enough to marry her. If a woman's crooked once, she'll always be crooked: she's going to double-cross me same as she double-crossed Jim!"

§ 2. It was in this frame of mind that he entered the building which contained the executive offices of the radio company. He passed the revolving doors, took the elevator, and went into the waiting-room, where, behind a brass rail, a single office-boy was seated.

Charley knew the place well: time was when he had haunted it. Then he came to seek an interview; now he had at least been asked to come, though in reply to a written appeal. He was laughed at then by underlings, but he was hopeful of his invention and secure in his domestic pride; now, though still full of faith in the sounder, he felt himself disgraced at home, and the office-boy's grin hurt him as grievously as if it were

Koviloor Acadamy
directed at him for Edith's treachery. He took his stand on the fact of his appointment.

"Here," he said sharply. "Take in my card to Mr Linton. I have an engagement with him."

The boy was still grinning.

"Mr Linton's gone," he said.

"No, he's not," said Charley. "Come on now; hurry up. I tell you," he went on, as if the phrase was a charm, "I have an engagement with him—and I'm busy."

"He went out five minutes ago."

Charley stared:

"But I have an engagement with him!"

"I'm sorry, but he went out."

Charley looked at his watch:

"I'm on time and I have an engagement with him."

The boy's grin became pitying. He shrugged, took the card, and left the waiting-room by an inner door. When he returned it was with the word that the second vice-president had been unexpectedly called back to his country-place, but would return for an hour on the following day.

Charley left the office under fire of the office-boy's grin.

"Called away unexpectedly!" sneered the inventor. "Someone wanted to play golf with him, I guess, and so business don't matter."

He went down in the elevator, cursing his luck. Surely this was the last straw. He banged through the revolving doors to the street. Here he had been on a fool's errand while his wife was making a greater fool of him by amusing herself with another man uptown.

§ 3. "Oh, it's Mr Vanaman!"

Charley looked up. Leaving the hall by the same door by which he was leaving it was Claire Girodet, his former stenographer.

Sometimes, in the old days, he had enjoyed sitting at his desk and watching her, with a quickened pulse-beat, as, her back turned to him, she bent over her typewriter, her shoulders broad and firm, her warm, white neck caressed by one little loosened strand of her jet-black hair. When she would sit beside his desk to take his dictation, her nearness made him breathe heavily, and once, bending his flushed face close to her round, pink cheeks, as they scrutinised a letter, his knee touched hers beneath the arm of the desk: he remembered in what a

Koviloor Academy
panic he had drawn away from her. Yet he had never once translated sensation in the terms of thought, never once dreamed of a fuller interpretation. Edith had forced him a step in that direction by giving the form and life of words to the suspicions bred in her by their betrayal of Jim and by allowing those suspicions to order the girl's dismissal; but the step had not brought him within sight of the goal: his mind remained innocent of intention. Ashamed to tell Claire of his wife's attitude, and more ashamed to plead his poverty, or the stenographer's inefficiency, as causes for her dismissal, he had sent her away with the feeble pretext that he had come into money and was retiring from business. When she had gone, he missed her. To-day she was smartly dressed. . . .

She was so secure. There were no "nerves" about her, and, Edith to the contrary notwithstanding, there was no artifice. She bore herself with the serenity of the well-nurtured animal. The white-and-pink of her skin was as sleek, the low-combed, gracefully bobbed hair, which draped her forehead and hid her ears, was as glossy as the coat of a prize King Charles spaniel.

Charley's face softened.

"Hello!" he said. "I'm glad to see you."

"He was glad to see her. Their parting had been friendly. He had always liked her ready sympathy and quick understanding in their daily work together; now he realised that he had also always liked to look at her firm beauty, her vivacious face, her sloelike eyes.

She put out a firm, ungloved hand and pressed the hand that met it.

"How do you like being retired?" she asked. She had the phraseology of the New York stenographer, but her voice was a velvet contralto, and she accompanied her every speech with a direct gaze.

"Well enough," he answered. The lie disconcerted him. "Are you working here?"

They were walking down the warm street.

"Oh, no!" She tossed her black head. "I only ran in to see one of the girls who's a friend of mine. I'm not working any more."

He looked at her again and saw that her clothes were better than Edith's.

"Married?" he asked.

Koviloor Acadamy

Her long-lashed eyes sought his face with a glance that was a caress and a tentative invitation.

"No-o," she slowly answered.

He understood. He thought of Edith, uptown there with Tyrrell: Edith alone with Tyrrell in her husband's home. Here reach of a man as poor as Charley Vanaman, and yet something for an evening now and then, for a brief consolation, for a forgetting of the perils that were near and the treacheries was something that, for a steady acquaintance, was beyond the that were being sworn against him. Why not? He had money left in his pocket. It was Edith who had opened his eyes to this girl's beauty and then sent the girl away. Edith, the traitor, of all woman! To treat his wife with her own medicine, to choose this very girl. . . .

They had reached a corner and stopped uncertainly:

"Which is your way?"

She nodded northward.

"You're going home?"

"I'd meant to. I'm living with a friend."

Charley saw again that her throat resembled warm ivory, that her skin was very white, her lips very red, and her hair like a storm-cloud. He thought again of Edith, the woman that had beguiled him into treachery to Jim: Edith with Tyrrell, tricking her second husband as she had tricked her first.

"Excuse me just a minute," said Charley.

He darted into the nearest subway station and drank from his flask.

When he came back, she was waiting where he had left her. She held her rich body in a position of careless serenity.

"Are you expected back soon to-day?" he asked, hoarsely.

"No," she said, "not to-day."

"Then let's have an early dinner together," he suggested, "and first we'll take a taxi through the Park."

Their glances met again—met and confided.

"All right," she said. . . .

Charley sent a messenger-boy to the house. The note thus conveyed curtly announced that he would not be home to dinner, because business connected with the invention would detain him downtown.

Koviloor Acadamy

TWENTY-THIRD CHAPTER

CHARLEY'S departure from his house for the offices of the radio company had not been postponed until his wife and his guest had returned to the parlour. He left while they were still at table, and for some time after they heard the front door close upon him, Tyrrell and Edith sat with the table between them.

Their coffee was unfinished; a bit of cake lay beside Edith's cup; there was a silver-plated platter of untouched fruit at the centre of the table, and at the place opposite that of the hostess was Charley's serviette, as he had dropped it, and Charley's chair pushed back as he had pushed it when he went away. The room was full of his memory; it was full of the memory of Mame and dead old man Vanaman. Along quite half of one side of the room stood the cumbersome sideboard: Vanaman had bought it when he set up housekeeping with his wife in Carmel, nearly forty years ago, and in the compartment nearest to the hall door Charley kept his liquor. The chairs had been bought with the sideboard. Charley and Mame and their father had been using them thrice daily from the date of their removal to New York until the day that the father was taken ill. Over Tyrrell's head hung a print of one of Landseer's most sentimental stags, which, Mame had said, Charley had given to his father as a birthday present. The thrifty knives and forks, their coating of silver worn away and showing the yellow surface of the baser metal beneath, were heavy and old-fashioned and Vanaman.

Halfway through the luncheon, a constrained silence had fallen between hostess and guest. The burden of talk had been placed upon Charley, and, now that he was gone, the Vanamans seemed still to demand exclusive attention. They were palpable, determined: the pause was hard to break.

Tyrrell rose and walked to a window looking upon a narrow plot of grass that ran beside the house, a bright green in a bath of yellow afternoon sunshine. With his back partially turned to the room, he lighted and began slowly to smoke a cigar. He

Kovilloor Acadamy
had often smoked when he was with Edith, and must have known that she would not object to it now; but this was the first time he had done so without going through the form of asking her permission.

Her hands clasped on the table before her, her coffee forgotten, Edith sat considering his tall, lean figure silhouetted against the bright window pane. He did, she reflected, look rather like Jim, after all. She wanted to talk; she must talk, and yet she could think of only the most banal things to say.

She asked:

"Is it going to rain?"

He seemed no better minded:

"No, it's quite clear." He did not turn.

"Is it? I thought this morning we might have some showers."

"It's quite clear," he said again.

He looked out of the window. There was nothing there to repay a second glance, but he kept it up. She felt that he did not want to keep it up, but had to.

"I'm afraid," she ventured, "this has all been stupid for you."

"Stupid? Oh, no; how could it be?"

"How couldn't it?"

He raised the window and flung away the cigar: she saw that scarcely half an inch of it had been burned.

He closed the window loudly. The noise seemed to silence the clamouring of the absent Vanamans.

"We can't go on like this," he said.

He had turned. His grave but pleasure-loving face was alight.

"We can't," he repeated. "We——"

She saw the light in his face. Called by it, she rose and slowly walked toward him.

"Edith!"

He tried to seize her, but she drew aside.

"The other house—the house next door," she said: "the windows——"

He followed her away from the possibility of observation and caught her in his arms.

"You do love me, dear?" he asked.

She felt his hold tighten, not as it usually tightened in the dance: more intimately, to the strains of a music that only they two could hear. His breath came brokenly; his heart was

Koviloor Acadamy
pounding against her breast; his lips were on her mouth. She could not breathe. The door of light was opened wide, and, crushed to him, she was being led through it—through it as she had never been led before. What did the dead or absent Vanamans matter now? She gave a little inarticulate sob and hid her head against his coat.

"Don't you know? Don't you *know?*" she murmured.

§ 2. Theirs was an impossible position: about that, and that only, Edith was clear. Though Charley, on several recent occasions, had sullenly submitted to what he must have seen to be love-making, he was not likely—now that the immediate reason for love-making was, from his point of view, satisfied—to continue to submit. The cause of his acquiescence, if his rival so much as guessed that there was acquiescence, stood between her and Tyrrell. She knew what her companion did not know and what she could never tell him: that Charley had begged her to flirt—a little—with this man in order to save her husband from disgrace, even perhaps from jail. Tyrrell, who had never lacked the wealth to secure his every desire, would never understand the weak man that had been pampered from childhood and now found himself deprived of the money to prolong the pampering.

Could she understand him? Ever since, a few days before, Charley had admitted his dishonesty or, rather, what was far worse, demonstrated his want of acumen to cover up his dishonesty, she had looked at him with horrified eyes. His weakness in appealing to her had made matters infinitely worse. Of all the failures she had known and loathed, her second husband's was the most complete.

She did not blame herself. She salved her conscience with the thought that she had saved Charley financially and that she felt a genuine pity for him. No, she was not at fault: her "artistic life"—the phrase that she now employed in recalling those days of uncertainty and over certainty which characterised her previous marriage—excused much that, had she married somebody who was not an artist, she would not have excused in herself; that life that had thrust her into the arms of the first sympathetic man who offered, and Charley's arms had promised to be strong, his sympathy enduring. All that she had wanted was success. With both husbands she had been wise enough to know that financial independence was essential to happiness; but Jim's aunt had failed to leave him the money

Koviloor Acadamy
Edith expected, and Charley, an only son and a much-loved son, had been cut out of his rich father's will without a penny. Jim had failed her by postponing his success, if success it were —she could not believe it would last—until it was too late to benefit her; Charley had failed by throwing his chance of success away. Tyrrell——

She *was* still young! The earlier desires and the earlier ambitions were still in her blood. She knew little enough of Tyrrell, but she knew that he loved her. Tyrrell had money of which no one could deprive him; he had position, he was a gentleman, he belonged to the world that she envied. Here was no chance of a third mistake. Here was passion, to be sure, but here also was tenderness and devotion; here were her dreams come true. She had thought that she was somehow tied to Charley, that she must maintain at least the appearance of loyalty to him: under Tyrrell's kisses she thought so no more. She even saw herself married to Tyrrell. She loved him.

§ 3. It was already four o'clock. For all the world as if they had been child-lovers in one of Uncle Morty's shifting homes at Ayton, they were sitting side by side, in the Vanaman parlour, on the ugly, uncongenial sofa on which, not so many days before, Edith and Charley had sat during the ordeal of the Zoller interview and held each other's hands.

The door bell rang, and the too-temporary maid brought Edith a note.

"Is there an answer? The messenger-boy didn't wait."

Edith opened and read the note.

"No, there's no answer," she said.

The maid left the room.

"From him?" inquired Tyrrell.

Edith nodded:

"He's detained by business. It's something about the receiver. He can't be home till late to-night."

Their eyes searched one another.

"Why not drive in town," suggested Tyrrell, "get a cocktail somewhere, and have a little dinner together? There's no reason for you to stay here—in this stuffy house."

There seemed indeed no reason to stay, and certainly no chance of detection if she went.

Yet Edith hesitated. Tyrrell had said he loved her: that changed everything. She did not know him well enough to

Koviloor Acadamy
know how much she could give him without losing all hope of return. When love has been confessed, a little dinner is a dangerous thing.

"You don't know how angry he would be if——"

"But how can he? You'll be back before ten o'clock; we can dine early. At least, we shall be together."

She remembered a song Jim used to sing in his mellow voice —Jim, who never followed its advice:

"Take what you can and can what you can't—
But take what you can when you can, dear."

Why not snatch at happiness—now? Charley had been really none the wiser for the luncheon; why should he learn of the dinner?

"I must dress——"

"No," he said. "We can go to some quiet place. It's better not, I think."

She agreed with him, and Edith was amazed to find herself trusting to a man's judgment.

"All right," she said, and went from the room to search for her hat and gloves.

She was singing softly as she went. She had not sung to herself more than once or twice since—since she left Jim.

§ 4. There was plenty of time—indeed, too much. So, when they saw a hansom with its sad cab-horse waiting disconsolately for almost impossible fares, an old-fashioned hansom-cab—one of New York's last relics of romance—Tyrrell hailed it, and they started down Fifth Avenue, hand in hand behind the shelter of its little doors.

"It's so much more fun," Tyrrell had explained with a boyishness that charmed her and that she had not dreamed of finding in him. "There's no *esprit* in a taxi. Any sort of low passion can ride in a taxi; but in a hansom only Love can ride."

Again the Avenue, its shop windows glittering and luring, was filled by that happy crowd which had filled it on the afternoon when, hopeless and envious, she passed along it on her unguessing way to meet the man that now sat beside her and made her belong to it. She could not now look for faces familiar to her from the society pages in the newspapers' Sunday supplements, and had she looked she would soon have remembered that the people of the society pages were away

Koviloor Acadamy
for the Summer—would have realised that the replacing throng was a throng of counterfeits and imitations. Her sense of happiness was too great. She saw the crowds only as a brilliant mist. For her they were all what they had been on that other afternoon, and she, thanks to Tyrrell, was one of them. She breathed the atmosphere of carelessness, of luxurious freedom from debt and from counting the cost, and it was as the air of Lautaret to a citizen of Amsterdam. She belonged to this life, and this life belonged to her.

At Thirty-fourth Street the traffic was retarded by a policeman for three or four minutes. Edith saw an inquiring head thrust out of a taxicab window. There was no mistaking: it was Charley's.

She clutched Tyrrell's hand convulsively: Tyrrell was looking in the opposite direction. If he had seen, he gave no sign; but Charley had seen: Edith convinced herself of that. When their hansom passed the taxi, Edith, her eyes fascinated, looked within. Charley was not alone; beside him, on the farther side, sat a robust girl, of warm ivory and healthy pink, with jet-black hair draped low over her broad forehead and coiled tight over her ears—the stenographer whom Edith had forced him to discharge. Charley was not now looking out of the window; he was not looking at Edith. Indeed, his broad back was turned as if to protect his companion from her possible gaze.

Edith turned to Tyrrell.

"Bob," she said, "don't you think the driver could get a little more speed out of this animal of ours?"

Koviloor Acadamy

TWENTY-FOURTH CHAPTER

SHE reached home before Charley: few scant minutes before. She made Tyrrell drop her at the door.

"No," she said, composedly enough; "don't come in. I want to be alone for a little while. I want to think things over."

Had he seen what she had seen? She did not know. She wished Tyrrell were a little less the gentleman—enough less to have commented on that glimpse of Charley if, indeed, the glimpse had come to him—but she knew him to be the sort that, seeing such a thing, would seem not to see it, would scorn to justify his course by any course which the husband of the woman he loved might elect to follow. So she said good-night and went indoors, where, a prey to emotions that she resolutely refused to analyse, she waited for Charley.

She went into the parlour and lighted every gas-jet—this woman that once wanted the darkness for thought. She paced up and down the room like a caged animal—like Charley, on the day when he waited for Mame to bring him word of his father's business with Zoller from his father's sickroom.

How was she to act? She did not want to know how she was to reason: she asked how she was to act. This moment was, somehow, her chance—but how? Rightly seized, the opportunity meant freedom from Charley, from debt and poverty, and drunkenness and lies: freedom to go to Tyrrell and success; to pass through the lighted door.

What hampered her was a genuine anger, that reasonless anger which is the fiercest, against the man who was still her husband. He had tricked her and betrayed her. He had done it meanly and clumsily as he did everything else, and his discovery had left him with no rag of his boasting to cover the unwholesome truth of his real personality; she saw him as undeserving even the false loyalty of pretended affection and forced adherence: weak, sodden, a liar, and a failure. She had been a fool to try to save him: he would let the fruits of this rescue slip through his fingers as he had let slip through them everything else worth while that his undeserved good luck had ever placed in his greedy, incompetent hands.

Koviloor Acadamy

They were safe from immediate financial ruin. No sooner had Tyrrell signed that cheque which saved Charley, than, her duty performed, she began to feel what now she felt: the sight of her husband in the taxi with that French girl had completed the change. She should have been prepared for this. Charley had cheated Jim: of course he would cheat his wife. She ought to have trusted her earlier instincts. She had been right, all along, in her suspicions: Charley had deceived her into bearing poverty, forced her into submission to his insults, put upon her the snubs of her acquaintances, wheedled her into lying for him, set her to washing his dishes, darning his socks, while he had been spending on other women the money that her economies saved. How long and with how many had it not been going on? And he had implored her to save him—for this stenographer: implored his wife to save him for his mistress. He had sold her for his paltry safety: worse than that, for his low pleasures. He sat through these past days, through this last luncheon, looking on while the purchase was completed; he left her to consummate the sale while he ran off to pay his foreign woman. To think that she could ever have contemplated continuing to live with him!

So far as her relations with Charley were concerned, Love for him, in the finest sense of that word, had left her as long ago as it left him—left her sooner. With her, too, there had been the partial returns, each lesser than the preceding; with her, too, the final cessation, the substituting of a passionate counterfeit, itself retreating and advancing until it should retreat for ever. The lies bred of their first clandestine intimacy had done for her what they did for him. What was left of her was what he now struck: her perverted conventional pride as a wife, the shapeless nothing that women of her early training consider as faith in their husband's fidelity and cling to as if it were their own honour, however unfaithful they themselves may be: tenderer than love, more easily hurt, eager to press into its own bosom every possible sword.

If she loved Tyrrell, it was Charley who had forced her to it, begged it with tears and almost on his knees. He had taught her dishonour by teaching her to help him in cheating her first husband. Jim had been right in scorning this creature. She remembered a score of light words that Jim had occasionally let fall concerning Charley; she applied them herself; she found them lashing her forward as no words of her own that

Koviloor Acadamy

she could find. And now Charley was playing on her the same trick he had once inveigled her into playing on Jim.

But how to act? That was what she must decide: how to act. Her resolution reeled. She had reached no conclusion when Charley came in.

§ 2. He came in almost at once: all that she had felt, she felt in the course of a few hurrying minutes. Frightened by the encounter at Thirty-fourth Street and angry because of it, Charley had left Claire after the dinner that he had promised her and had then fortified himself with an unusual quantity of liquor.

He stood glaring at Edith, his froglike eyes bulging over black bags of unhealthy skin; the loose grey skin of his cheeks trembled at the twitching of the facial muscles deep beneath it: she saw him a traitor, a failure, a weakling. She faced him, arrested in her pacing of the brightly lighted room, her brown eyes angry beacons, her face hardened, the paint on her cheeks like daubs of vermilion on a white-washed wall: he saw her a traitor, a common scold, a loose woman.

Her first words came from her without an instant of reflection:

"Well," she sneered, "I hope you were successful in the business that kept you downtown."

Her tone allowed him no chance to hope that she had not seen. He walked up to her.

"Yes," he said, "I was successful. I went in for that business because I saw you were going in for the same sort of thing."

The same sort of thing! He could compare his excursion in the company of a stenographer with the idyl of which she had been a part! She thought of the grace and charm and love of Tyrrell; of the awkward vulgarity and lust of Charley and his mistress. Her cheeks now burned with a natural red.

"You never saw anything of the sort," she said.

"I saw you in that hansom with Tyrrell."

"What if you did? What if you did? You sent home word you weren't to be here—you sent home that lie about business; couldn't I go out to dinner with your friend and have nothing said about it?"

"*My* friend?"

"He's the best friend you've got." She stood with her fists clenched at her sides. "He's kept you out of jail to-day."

Koviloor Acadamy

"Well, don't pretend it was only a dinner engagement. I saw the way you two were looking at each other when I came in for lunch. I saw the way you looked when I had to leave you——" He choked.

She wanted to tell this man that she hated him and all the dreadful reasons for her hatred, and yet, because she remained only a conventional woman who did unconventional things, she still more wanted to preserve her conventional honour.

"You told me I was to flirt with him," she said.

"I did not."

"You did. You told me to, and you know it."

"I said you might do it if there wasn't any other way."

"Why don't you finish it? You mean if there wasn't any other way for me to get money out of him for you."

"All right. Put it however you like. I don't care."

"Well, there wasn't any other way."

"Did you look for one?"

"Yes, I did."

"Very well. But what I said was 'flirt a little.' I didn't say you were to——"

"Go out to dinner with him? Where is the harm in that?"

"You know what I mean."

"I know what *you did*. I know what you've been doing. You've been running around town with common women. You've been carrying on with that painted French girl——"

"Just a moment, please. I——"

"Don't use that 'Just a moment': it sets me wild. I tell you you've been carrying on with that painted French——"

"Edith!"

"Oh, yes, you have! Don't try to lie any more to me. That rotten stenographer that you promised to discharge——"

"I did discharge her."

"From that place, yes," said Edith. Her nostrils dilated. "And then you gave her another sort of job. You promoted her!"

The difference between them was this: that Edith was, at least for the time, in love with Tyrrell, whereas Charley, though he admired Claire, had recognised at the outset that she was too expensive a luxury for his permanent possession, felt her something that was only passing, and frankly admitted as much both to himself and to the girl. He could therefore bear any insult aimed at Claire, but must resent, if he was to

Koviloor Acadamy

maintain the conventional husband's upper hand, any suspicion of his own conduct.

"I never did anything of the sort," he said. "You must think you leave me money to spare. Till to-night I haven't seen her since I fired her."

Edith sniffed.

"That's a likely story!"

"It's the true one."

"Then, why did you send home that lie about business? You haven't business enough to keep you busy during the day. You never did like to work, and you never have worked. You've always lived on somebody else, and of course you've been seeing this French girl while you pretended to be at your office."

"Nonsense; how'd I get the money?"

"The way you got the other money, I suppose. Beg it, or——"

"I tell you, it's not true. I was kept downtown on business as I said I'd be, and on the way up I happened to meet Miss Girodet——"

"And I suppose she stopped her motor-car and told her chauffeur to get down and call you over and offer to drive you home?"

"No. Just a moment, please. As I was saying——"

"Oh," Edith broke out, "I told you not to use that 'Just a moment'—and I don't care what you were saying! I'm going to bed." She started toward the door, deciding to shut herself in a spare bedroom and determine her course of action; but she flung one more word at him: "I know what you've been *doing*, and that's enough for me!"

Rage boiled up in him. His accidental innocence righteously protested; but he could not prove his innocence. He felt she had tricked him to the end, even to this mere detail of somehow capturing and maintaining the rôle of the injured party, when, as a matter of fact, she had betrayed him to Tyrrell. That he, the husband, had contemplated betraying her, no longer counted with him. He felt only that he must gain the mastery.

"Stop!" he cried: it was his old command. He caught her arm and flung her around until, panting from pain, she once more faced him. "I won't have this. We've got to be honest with each other once and for all. I know how far you've gone with Tyrrell—I know it as well as if I'd seen it; and you can't say anything that'll make me believe anything else." The

Koviloor Acadamy
sound of his words whipped his anger. "I know what your game is. You're in love with him. You've ruined me. You made me a perjurer in that case against Jim, and now you're cooking up the same sort of a scheme with Tyrrell against me!"

His grasp hurt her, and the hurt tore away the last vestige of her caution.

"Made a perjurer of you!" she yelled. Her voice rasped. Her lips were twisted with suffering, mental and physical. "You jumped at the chance. You were born a crook. Don't you put on moral airs to me! I know you! You've cheated your sister. You're nothing but a thief! Do you hear?—A common crook! Why don't you answer? Jim? *He was fifty times more of a man than you are!*"

She was tugging at the hand that held her. At the mention of Jim, Charley suddenly released his hold, and she tottered back.

There surged to the surface of his consciousness all the venom that had been brewing in his brain since the day when he first conspired with her against Jim,—the venom from all the consequent poverty, debauchery, deceit,—and he spewed it out.

"You're in love with *Jim!*" he shouted. "That's what's the matter with you, you old cat—older than I am and older than he is. And what I got when I got you was what he'd used up and wanted to throw away!"

His jealousy sickened her; it spoiled everything that it touched. She had but one thought: to stop the dirty tide of his speech; but one desire: to dam the foul flood of his accusation—and yet it ran on and on, giving her no chance to answer. He barred her way to the door and allowed her no opportunity for retreat.

"Jim, Jim, Jim! You've got to quit thinking about him. By *God,* you've got to quit thinking about him! I know what you are, and I'm going to tell you."

He burst into an insane fit of denunciation, ridicule, reproach. It flung garbage, offal, crawling carrion. It was like the opening of a sewer-tap. The brutalities of business, the vulgarities of the street, the sweepings of low bar-rooms, the scourings of slums and stews roared from his lips and deluged her. They seemed to spatter the very walls of the Vanaman parlour. They beat on her, submerged her. To have to listen was to be defiled. There was no vileness with which he did

Koviloor Acadamy
not charge her, no vicious bond with which he did not lash her to Jim, to Tyrrell, to persons suspected and persons unknown—but most of all to Jim.

Then he stopped in the midst of a sentence, struck her full across the face, and, as she reeled backward, tripped and fell, he rushed out of the room.

§ 3. Under the blaze of the lights, Edith lay on the floor. She was partially stunned by her fall, and nearly fainting from the exhaustion following her war of emotions; but she heard her husband go into the dining-room. She heard him open the compartment in the sideboard where his whisky was kept. She heard the clinking of a glass against a bottle. Then she heard him repass down the hall by the parlour, without pausing to look in, and climb the stairs to their bedroom.

She heard what would happen now. He was taking a bottle and glass to bed with him: he would nurse his anger upon liquor until he had drunk himself into a stupor. Yet now it came to her in a flash that this was no longer anything to dread. That bottle which, in the deepest sense, Jim had placed in Charley's hand, took Charley out of her way at the moment when her decision waited only on his absence. It became only something to use for the present occasion—to use in order that she might be done with it forever.

She lay quiet on the floor. She waited until she was certain he would be too drunk to hear her moving about, or, hearing, interfere. Once convinced of this, she went softly upstairs and, a little later, softly left the house.

From the next house there came a light and the sound of hoarse music. A music-machine was playing "Old Man River." Edith stopped an involuntary moment to listen, and then went on her way.

She was going toward the door of light, toward the Fifth Avenue of half-past four o'clock in the afternoon, toward Romance and Love and Success. She had turned her back on Failure. She was going to the man that was so unlike Charley; she was going to the man that had once or twice reminded her of Jim.

Koviloor Acadamy

TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER

CHARLEY was awakened by the hot light of a late summer mid-morning pouring in at the window of the bedroom, which he had forgotten to open, and beating on his face. The room stank; there was a buzzing of flies. He raised his head, but quickly lowered it: his head was full of sledge-hammers that beat outward on his skull. The bed seemed to pitch and sway. He turned his aching eyes to right and left: there was no sign of Edith. Then he longed for water and knew that it would sicken him again, and quailed at the thought of a drink of the bootleg whisky, knowing that, if he could force it down his throat, it would strengthen him. He must have one drink of it— just one drink—to steady his nerves and still that banging agony in his head. Painfully, slowly, he groped for the bottle on the floor beside the bed: the bottle was empty.

That effort and its failure were almost too much for him. He sank back with a groan upon his heated pillow. The pillow was rank with the sweat of the drunkard. He had seen, in raising his head, enough of the room to know that it was in a frightful condition. He closed his eyes. For half an hour he lay still, trying to summon the resolution to move again. Slowly, the events of yesterday, the wrangle of last night, the memory of the blow, came back to him.

He swore heavily. At last he got up and stood clutching the bedpost.

"Edith!" he called.

There was no answer.

He went to the door and opened it, meaning to call to her from the hall and have her fetch him some whisky, but on the threshold was a bit of paper that held his attention. He saw it was a letter addressed to him in Edith's hand. He stooped dizzily for it, shut his eyes, groped, lurched, and got it as he sprawled forward on the floor. He opened the envelope with palsied fingers. It contained a half sheet of note-paper covered with hurried lines. Kneeling, he read:

Koviloor Acadamy
"After what you have done to me, of course you can't ever expect to see me again. A beating isn't ground for divorce in this state, but I know enough now to know there's plenty of other evidence of the right sort, and if you're one-half as brave as Jim was, you won't stand in the way. As soon as I've seen my lawyer I'll have him telephone you."

He made no audible comment: he merely struggled into his clothes. There was still a little whisky downstairs; he drank it and, with that heavy on his breath, set forth for the offices of the radio company in which lay the last hope of the Vanaman Receiver. . . .

A half-hour later, he was a ruined man. The second vice-president had spared enough time from his few hours of work to end an office-nuisance: he demonstrated to Charley beyond the last shadow of doubt that the Vanaman Receiver infringed upon a patent secured long before the date of his invention, but only recently put into use, by a rival corporation.

Charley could not get drunk. He drank steadily, seated alone in his miserable office with the receiver grinning at him from the table; but the more he drank, the clearer his brain became, the sharper the outlines of the things he wanted to forget.

Edith was gone. She was, of course, gone to Tyrrell. There was the hideous shame of that: little of the pain of it, but a shame the greater because it had to itself the field which it might have had to share with the pain. His wife had inflicted on him what he considered the last marital dishonour and, in doing this, had linked him, in the world's eyes, with Jim, whom, for this same dishonour, Charley had so long despised. Edith had written "Cuckold" all across the page of his domestic life.

The receiver was a leering ruin. The years of thought that he had given it, the hopes that he had built on it, the sleepless nights and the days of toil, the money spent, the debts incurred, the crimes committed for it, profited him nothing. The rival invention pre-dated him so obviously that he would have no chance to fight it through a long patent litigation, even if he had the money. How the patent office had failed to discover his infringement long ago and notified him at the beginning he could not guess; he knew that such mistakes did sometimes occur and he had to acknowledge that this was one

Koviloor Acadamy
of them. He seized the model instrument from the office table and ripped it to pieces with his bare hands.

He was a thief in imminent danger of detection and arrest. He had stolen from Tyrrell through misrepresentation and from his sister outright. The Tyrrell theft might be explained even now, and, in any event, its victim would not dare to prosecute—that was the one grey ray of light—but Zoller would. Except for the cheque that Tyrrell had given him—the price, he bitterly reflected, of his honour—he was penniless.

Again he telephoned to Mame, but again a voice that must have been Mrs Hamilton's informed him that she was not to be seen; it directed him to Zoller. He went to Mrs Hamilton's apartments, but the maid left him at the door and presently returned to him with this note from his sister:

"Dear Brother,—

"I extremely regret that, under advice of counsel, it will be impossible for me to see you or again communicate with you in any form, pending your rendering to me, through my attorney, a satisfactory accounting in the matter of our dear father's estate.

"Your affectionate sister,

"Mary L. Vanaman."

Charley crumpled the letter in his fist. One or two faint touches showed the softening influence of his sister's character as he had known it in years gone by, but all of the tenor, and much of the phraseology, were unmistakably Zoller's.

He thought of chequing out more of Mame's money and running away with it; but he was too much afraid of her lawyer and too much afraid to be alone. No, there was only one thing to be done: Charley must make his accounting. The danger of jail was far keener than the shame of Edith's conduct, sharp as that shame was; the threat of imprisonment—although it did not emanate from Mame, and might yet, by Mame, be diverted—was worse than the threat of penury.

He went back to his office and fell to work. His peculations from his father's estate would be covered, but not much more than covered, by the proceeds of Tyrrell's cheque. He used it for that purpose and, just as the grim little Zoller was about

Koviloor Acadamy
to leave for home, Charley reached that attorney's stuffy workshop.

§ 2. "Very well," said Zoller, after one of the most uncomfortable hours that Charley had ever passed. "The bank books of course have to be balanced, but so far as I can tab them up by these stubs, they agree with your accounting. I don't pretend to understand these entries"—a thin forefinger pointed to the record of the cheques drawn by Charley for his own uses and clumsily explained—"but the deposit made to-day covers those amounts."

The words were an acquittal, but the way that Zoller's mouth snapped shut when he had ended them was more like an announcement of conviction.

Charley wiped the sweat from his forehead.

"Will you let me see Mame now?" he asked.

"I have here," said Zoller, with splendid precision drawing the one paper that he wanted from the bundle on his desk, "a formal rescinding of your appointment and power of attorney, signed by your sister. She has decided to nominate me as your successor."

"Will you let me see Mame now?" Charley repeated.

"After I have given her some advice over the telephone," said Zoller.

§ 3. Charley sat on the Chippendale chair from Grand Rapids in the quinquilateral parlour of Mrs Hamilton's flat. He was here to beg Mame to go back home and to take him with her. He had one faint hope: the hope that he might induce her to set him up in some small business; but he was, above all, seeking an asylum—and yet he was afraid to face her. Through all the years when her refusal meant nothing to him, she had never refused him. This evening, and he knew it, he must confront a newMame. Nothing was his, everything hers. If she denied him now, who had not once denied him while their father lived, she would be denying him food and shelter: his very bread and butter depended on the will of the sister he had always scorned.

"Good-evening, Charley."

She stood in the doorway, dressed in a formless black gown of some cheap material, her myopic eyes peering through her thick spectacles, but with what his timid imagination interpreted as a strange firmness about her once vacuous face.

Koviloor Acadamy
He staggered to his feet. "Mame," he said: "Dear Mame!" and, his whole figure expressing penitence and despair, he began to sob out his story to her, like a naughty child entangled beyond hope of evasion and seeing safety only in confession at the parental knee. He told her everything—everything, that is, but his own dishonesty.

She heard him through without comment. When he had finished she said:

"It's just about what I expected of *her*; but I must say I didn't expect it of you, Charley."

"Me?" He didn't in the least comprehend.

"Yes, you, Charley."

"But it was Edith. Haven't I just been telling you? Edith's gone and run away to this Tyrrell guy." He began to guess that she suspected. "What have *I* done?" he asked.

Mame's face became as grave as such a face can become.

"You know," she said.

"What do you mean? What do you mean? Mame, do you mean to say you think I took your money?"

He had let it out before she became specific, but that mattered little: there is no betraying a demonstrated fact.

"I know it," said Mame.

"Mame, how dare you?" He tried to bluster and then caught the fixity of her pale eyes. "Your own brother!" he sobbed.

"It's no use, Charley." She shook her head. It was a head slow to grasp, but stubbornly retentive. "Mr Zoller telephoned while you were on your way here."

Charley argued; he declared that Zoller, even if prompted by the best of motives toward his client, could not be sure. He explained his expenditures in half a dozen conflicting ways. He wept. But Mame had only one sadly monotonous reply:

"Mr Zoller knows."

"The accounts are square!" cried Charley. "Even if I did use some of the money, it's paid back. It's all there. Zoller himself admits that."

Yes, Zoller admitted it, but the repayment did not suffice:

"It's knowing you could ever have done such a thing," said Mame.

If she had only wept, he would have been able to deal with her; she used to weep so easily; but she did not weep now: she stood there in a sort of sad placidity. He couldn't understand this sister. He was terribly afraid of her. Charley's

Koviloor Acadamy

tears ceased to flow for the sake of effect: they flowed because he was hopeless.

"Come back, Mame," he sobbed. "Come back to the old house and let me be there with you. Don't turn me out—your own brother!"

Neither Mame's voice nor her expression changed.

"Listen here, Charley," she said. "You are my own brother and I hope I'm a Christian woman——" He made a pitifully grateful movement toward her, but she stopped him by a mere shake of her head. "I hope I'm a Christian woman, and I'm going to try to do my duty," she continued, "*but*—I'm not going to be a blamed fool. I'm going to remember poppa and do what he'd want. All my life's been kind of arid, and you'd like it to keep on being. Now it's going to change. It's just been like the Bible says: I was like a pelican of the wilderness and an owl of the desert; but here's where you get off."

"Get off?" And it was Mame speaking! Where had she learned such a phrase? To be sure, she must often have heard him use it, but for her to repeat it—— He mistrusted his ears. He did not know this woman. For a moment he was utterly dumbfounded by her entire attitude. Then:

"But, Mame——" he began.

"*Just a moment, please,*" said Mame. She looked like a bovine oracle uttering the will of implacable gods. "Of course I'm going to do what's right by you, but you see I know you now better than even poppa did, and so it wouldn't be right—it wouldn't be what poppa'd want—if I did as much as he used to. I won't do anything that I and Mr Zoller think poppa'd disapprove of if he were here to have his say. Now, I'll come back to the house, for that was mine, and not yours; poppa always wanted that I should have it, anyhow. And you can live there with me—by yourself: you don't seem to know how to manage a wife. You've shown you're not fitted for business, and you're safer if you don't have a job. I'll give you a regular allowance—or Mr Zoller will. It won't be as much as you used to get, for if poppa was alive he'd know that wasn't good for you. Still, it'll be as regular as it ever was, and you won't be having any expenses to speak of. You can have the room you used to have before you were married, and I'll run the house and make everything as pleasant as possible; but *I* will run it. And you've got to quit drinking, Charley. I'll do my duty as a Christian and as your sister, but my duty don't include living under the same roof with a wicked woman, if

Koviloor Acadamy
you could get Edith back, and me being your sister only makes it more important I should follow poppa's will; and now I've got back the money where I see he all along meant it should be, I'm going to keep it—*all of it*—in my own hands."

He listened to her, scarcely understanding. He realised only that she was using compulsion against him and that she could use it successfully. This was the woman of whom he had always thought that she " didn't count."

" Mame," he sobbed, " is this sisterly of you? "

" It's what poppa would have wanted," said Mame. " Mr Zoller will attend to everything. It's what poppa would have wanted, and I've got to think of myself and poppa."

Koviloor Acadamy

LAST CHAPTER

MAME had her way. She had her way completely. For the first time in her life, this weak woman found in her hands the unchallenged whip and reins of power, and she employed them with the cool determination that is to be found nowhere among mankind save in the weak made strong.

For a while, for almost as much as a month, Charley tried to rebel against it, in secret. The little money he had left he spent, as a sort of protest against Mame's tyranny and Edith's desertion, on Claire Girodet; but when that money was gone and there remained only Mame's allowance, which scarcely kept him in poor tobacco and furtive whisky, Claire plainly expressed her expected opinion that he was impudent to suppose she could care anything about him except what his money had brought. She called him—exactly as Edith had—a fool; she said he looked like a frog. At the climax of an ugly scene, when he had cringed while she scolded, she dismissed him for ever, as a Bordeaux housewife would dismiss a thieving *bonne à tout faire.*

He thought about regaining his independence by getting work. Without Mame's knowledge—for she was resolute in her belief that he was safest unemployed—he sullenly sought a position, but he sought without finding. He had no genuine business experience and no clerical education. He was not even a competent manual worker or handyman. He had never been a practical inventor; he possessed no skill with tools; amid the clutter of his uninstructed brain, he had merely stumbled on the idea of the receiver and exploited it. Lacking training and recommendations, looking twice his age and all his habits, he was everywhere informed that he was too old and too incompetent. He had to abandon his search and remain what Mame wanted him to be. As time passed, he succumbed to her firmer will; he settled down to the part of a barely-tolerated family skeleton rigorously confined to a cupboard to which only his sister and Zoller possessed the keys.

From the first, the attorney, who exercised so subtle an influence over Mame, reduced Charley to abject terror.

Koviloor Acadamy
Lawyer and client made certain of the brother's peculations, and his sin, like the Psalmist's, was ever before him, though present because of a very different agency. He was frightened into his first submission, and, once having submitted, he lost all chance of future liberty.

Long ago he had been told he must not be so sentimental and so compromising as to permit Edith to divorce him: he was to divorce her. He would leave everything to Zoller. He was not to bother over the thought of Edith's contesting the suit; Zoller, with the evidence that was in his capable hands, would see she did nothing of the sort, and would see there was no publicity. So Charley appeared before a referee; he answered, in words previously supplied him, questions he had been warned would be asked; and one evening Mame quite casually let fall the news that the decree of divorce had been made final a week before.

That news was a fair example of his entire situation in his father's house. The even course of the Vanaman establishment, its traditional respectability and quiet, were thus preserved. Late summer gave place to autumn and autumn to winter, and Edith was apparently forgotten, and Mame reigned in her stead.

Charley's descent became rapid, and led to a position wholly servile. His sister now treated him as if he were a child, a child in disgrace; an idiot aunt bequeathed to Mame's care by the preceding generation; a piece of furniture too decrepit for use and too unfashionable for exhibition, but, because a deceased and respect parent had sometimes used it, now tolerated in the limbo of "upstairs." He was given all the odd jobs about the house to do, and Mame found many. Zoller, the stony-hearted, directed and shared Mame's power, called often to consult with his client, and regularly, on the fifteenth day of every month, summoned Charley into the gloomy parlour and handed over the meager allowance, for which he exacted a punctilious receipt. Out of these sums the pensioner purchased the bad tobacco and contraband whisky, and soon ceased much to care.

He scuttled about the back ways and corners of the house, unshaven and collarless. He clung to a waistcoat, but was more comfortable without a coat. He had visibly shrunken; his clothes hung more loosely than ever, and his eyes, above the hollows in his cheeks, were more prominent. He walked with a shuffle in a pair of his dead father's carpet-slippers

Koviloor Acadamy

that were too big for him. When he was allowed to talk at all, he never mentioned his Chinese adventures. Occasionally he felt the stirrings of ideas for money-making, reflex movements, mere brain-throbs to the tune of former habit; but he had neither the means nor the energy to encourage them, and they gradually became less and less frequent. His greatest solace was to lock himself in his narrow room at night and drink himself to sleep. Sometimes he wondered why he had been such a fool as to marry Edith, marriage being unnecessary, and reflected again on the male commonplace that a woman untrue to one man will be untrue to another. He read the newspapers, when his sister was through with them, and in one of these he once read some mention of Tyrrel as being in the Orient, which led him to suppose Edith adrift. From words that he overheard pass between Zoller and his sister—he eavesdropped on them continually and found a sort of adventurous pleasure in it—he caught a report that his wife had been living with George Mertcheson, and that Mertcheson was dead. Most of the pensioner's passions degenerated into inclinations; only one retained its former force, grew indeed with the decline of its fellows: his hatred of the man from his conspiracy against whom all his disasters derived. He hated Jim.

§ 2. When Edith had left the Vanaman house, she went direct to Tyrrell's club. She would have telephoned ahead, but the telephone had once before betrayed her, and when she reached the street she did not want to lose time. At the corner she looked for an unengaged taxi: all that flew by her had their tin flags lowered, bearing happy freight home from the theatres or away to tango-suppers. Then she remembered what Tyrrell had said: "Any sort of passion can ride in a taxi; but in a hansom only Love can ride." An empty hansome was standing beside the curb; slow as such a conveyance must be, she decided to take it.

Tyrrell was not at his club: the cabman returned with the hall-porter, who told her so. Mr Tyrrell had come in a short time before, but had gone out again, the porter had not the least idea where.

"Where to now?" asked the driver.

Back? Should she say "Back"? Edith would never say that. She had a little money; she said the first name that entered her head:

Koviloor Acadamy

"The 50-50 Club."

She wondered if Tyrrell could be at any such place. She had not thought of him as frequenting restaurants and public dances without her; it was certainly unlikely that he would seek one after what had passed between them; yet she did not know where else to look for him. She must hunt until she found.

At the 50-50 Club, where Tyrrell was known, she was told that he had left a few minutes since, saying something about running up to another such of his haunts. It was good, in the quiet of West Fortieth Street, to see him, in response to her message, strolling, leisurely and hatless, from the café to her cab.

"You?" He was unmistakably startled. "I hadn't any idea——"

"No; I didn't send in my name."

He leaned over the flap of the cab: "Of course I'm no end glad to see you. But what is it? What's wrong? I thought——"

Edith put her face close to his: "Everything. He beat me—with his fist. So I left him. I walked right out."

She saw Tyrrell's lips tighten. In their movement, she welcomed her champion.

"I sha'n't be two minutes," he said.

He was better than his word. He came back with his hat and stick and leapt into the hansom.

"Anywhere you like," he answered the driver's question. "I knew I couldn't sleep if I went to bed, dear," he explained to Edith, "and so I've been knocking about here, looking on. I hope you hadn't to trail me far?"

She shook her head. He had taken her hand; his voice wa tender and considerate; but she wished that he would kiss he —wished that she could see his face.

"Now," he said, "tell me all about it."

She gave him the broad outlines. Jim she did not mention, for she had never mentioned Jim to Tyrrell; but the quarrel with Charley needed no further explanation than that she gave:

"So he beat me because he's jealous of you, and now I'm going to divorce him."

"You're going to sue?" Tyrrell's voice was sharp. He called to the cabby to take them to the Delevingne. "We'll go up to the roof," he said to Edith, "and talk this thing over quietly."

Koviloor Acadamy

Up there she saw his face, and it frightened her. It frightened her because it showed that she had frightened him. There was music; people were dancing; but Tyrrell did not ask her to dance. He sat opposite her, over a bottle of champagne, and made her tell him the story a second time. He seemed loath to comment on it, but at last he said:

"Of course you can't be beaten by this brute. That's got to be stopped. I daresay it wouldn't become chronic, but your husband had better be brought to reason right away."

She did not like his tone. She did not like his reference to Charley as her husband.

"My lawyer'll bring him to reason," she said. She felt her lips twitching.

"Yes, that's an excellent idea. I tell you what we'll do"—his face brightened: "you'll put up at the Commodore for a few days at my expense, and if you don't mind accepting a bit of money—we can make it a loan if you insist—till your lawyer has given your husband a good talking to."

"But," said Edith—"but——"

"But of course," Tyrrell pursued, "there mustn't be any divorce, or anything of that sort." He looked at her evenly. "You see that now as well as I do, don't you? People of the sort you and I are don't go in for that kind of mud, do they? Why"—he smiled at her—"when I think of my mother, or of all my stodgy old dead and gone Massachusetts ancestors, when you think of your quiet family in Ayton—— After all, you and I have escaped being Manhattanites, haven't we?"

She saw it all now. He would not have a scandal; he had never meant anything but a clandestine love affair, and he did not care enough about that to run any great risk. It was to be something little and low, like Charley's assignations with a stenographer. She scarcely knew what she was desperately saying:

"But there needn't be any publicity. I got a divorce from Jim, and almost nobody——"

"Jim? From Jim? Then you've——"

"Yes, from Jim Trent. He's an artist."

Tyrrell beckoned to the waiter. While the bill was being fetched, her host said:

"I know Mr Trent's work. I know a little about him; but I didn't know you did." He looked at her and smiled again—a smile that now made Edith shiver. "Well, well," he said,

Koviloor Acadamy
" you put up at the Commodore, and we'll think it over. I'll come around to-morrow afternoon at four."

§ 3. She had no choice; she had to obey him; but he did not call on her at four o'clock the next afternoon: he never called on her again. Instead, he sent her a note that was tender and affectionate in its wording, and in its tone a sheer surrender of every desire for her, a panic flight before the guns of scandal. He had been called to Boston by his mother's illness; he did not know when he could return. The possibility of further physical violence must, of course, be ended, but his advice was fervent for a reconciliation between wife and husband.

" What," he wrote, " was innocent in our minds "—he could call it that, this now cautious man, who would not commit himself in writing!—" your husband has evidently misconstrued, and although I shall always stand ready to do anything I can to help the finest woman I even knew, it is better, for the sake of everybody concerned, that I efface myself, even beyond the point of receiving a reply to this note, from a situation which it was never our intention should wound anyone." He enclosed, without comment, five one-hundred-dollar bills.

That was the fall of the structure she had founded on Tyrrell's affections. She had, she saw, torn it down by her proposal of a divorce and the mention of her divorce from Jim. She saw Tyrrell genuflecting before a New England family that had never known a divorce, a Boston set in which the indecencies held fast to the mask of respectability. She realised that this was the end. She hated him for having rejected her, hated him for the very qualities that had attracted her to him: for his politeness and thin polish, and for the sort of people from whom he originated. She hated him almost as much as she hated Jim, whose relation to her she held responsible for this catastrophe. She wrote to Tyrrell, but he did not reply.

Through a sleepless night, she came to her decision. She would not return to Charley. The money she kept without question. Against the background of her long poverty, five hundred dollars baulked like wealth. Besides, for a time, she hoped, against conviction, that Tyrrell would write again.

She went to lawyer Schultz and asked him to get her a divorce from Charley, but Schultz, remembering her conduct

Koviloor Acadamy
in the former case, refused her; he might almost be said to have turned her out of his office. Leishman listened, but, after he had heard from Zoller, demonstrated to her amazed indignation that, if she did not want to be exhibited to the public in the worst of light, she must submit to appearing as a respondent. Her case, though for other reasons, was what Jim's had been : guiltless, she must submit to appearing guilty.

Among her shattered hopes, she passed some terrible days. She came from them into a period of extravagance, in which she spent the better part of the money Tyrrell had left her. She bought a few of the clothes that she had long wanted. Recklessly, she returned alone to the restaurants, the cabarets, the tango-teas. She renewed, but failed to keep up, her acquaintance with the stray women she had met there; with whatever man asked her to dance, she danced. She left the Commodore, and when her money was gone, she tried to get a place as a professional dancer.

"You've no chance," the café proprietors told her. "A few months ago, you might have got on, but we're filled up with real vaudeville stars now-a-days."

The frail-limbed master that had taught her the new dances would not give her lessons to fit her for professional dancing except at prices beyond the reach of her dwindling capital. "I told you, anyhow," he said, "you wouldn't do for the cabarets." She could nowhere find a partner that could make her dance as Tyrrell had made her.

Once she thought of appealing to Jim, but she was too bitter and too proud for that. Tyrrell was now out of reach; he was travelling in the Orient, she was told, and had left no address behind. She did write to her relatives. Uncle Gregory sent her a cheque for fifty dollars and another letter that was a sermon against divorce; the Reverend Stephen sent her a ten-dollar bill and asked her not to acknowledge its receipt: letters from her upset his wife.

After a sharp illness, she returned to Ayton, where Aunt Caroline sat in the parlour with folded hands and pursed lips and said nothing, while Aunt Polly chewed gum and asked her why she had been such a fool as to lose Jim, and Aunt Hattie blinked and grinned and giggled her religion. Pug-nosed Uncle Morty complained to these aunts of the additional expence, in tones intended to reach Edith's ears, and she went back to New York as soon as she could borrow, from Aunt Hattie's music-lesson fund, the money to get there. For a

Koviloor Acadamy
time, after that, she took up with Effie Mitchell, but they quarrelled. All of her other old acquaintances, and especially Diana, she avoided.

She had been collecting misfortunes as some people collect postage stamps. There comes the point when money continues to grow without effort by the possessor: Edith's mishaps grew by interest, simple and compound. She met Mertcheson, and he offered to befriend her. On the night of their meeting, they danced hard together and rode to his rooms in an open taxi-cab. Five minutes after the ride was over, Mertcheson had a chill; he was desperately ill all night, and she dared not leave him. The next day the doctor that she called in diagnosed his patient's case as one of pneumonia and, although Edith, in her old fear of death, nursed him with a desperate tenderness, Mertcheson died. It was only then that Edith thought of sending for his relatives and brought his mother, a quiet, sad-eyed woman in black, to the bed on which the body of the man with the unfinished ears and trivial chin lay dead.

"Are you the nurse?" asked Mrs Mertcheson.

"No," said Edith. Her discretion had fled the presence of mortality. "I'm just a friend."

The mother took her son's body away, and somehow the thing, escaping the papers, was whispered in the clubs. The fact that its real victim had once been James Trent's wife made it worth whispering.

She had the full name without much of the game. She took an ugly room in Sixteenth Street, west of Sixth Avenue. She had twenty dollars that she had found in Mertcheson's pockets, and, in early May, she faced a speedy choice between playing the real game or death. She passed three days deciding.

When she thought of Charley, it was first with scorn and later with a certain tolerance. The worst thing about the failure of their life together had been its monotony: even their quarrels had been of one monotonous piece; they had said the same phrases over and over, made the same accusations week by week. It all went back to Jim, who had calculatingly let her divorce him, whom even Schultz perversely thought she had wronged: the poverty, the lies, the drunkenness, even the disloyalty to Charley, the wreck of that very disloyalty, all went back to Jim. She saw that, had Charley prospered, or old Vanaman been kind, her union would still have been much what it was—because of Jim. The breath of its original deceit

Kovilqor Acadamy
had become an entire atmosphere of deception surcharged with the lightnings of suspicion—because of Jim. Even now, Jim, who had brought them together and made them repel each other, somehow, across the city, united them—Jim, who, she finally thought, had probobly allowed her to divorce him because he wanted to get rid of her.

She had become careless in her habits and in her dress. Her face had hardened, her voice was harsher, her brown eyes dull. She had abandoned her last thought of success; her highest ambition was for some endurable compromise. She was always lonely, so lonely that, from sheer habit, she would sometimes wish Charley were with her, if only to have him to quarrel with and to talk to about the wrong that Jim had done them. But on this May evening she must think about the ways of escaping from life: she was thinking about death when somebody knocked at her door.

§ 4. At first she did not know who he was.

He was a tall man, clean shaven, silver-haired. His eyes were sharp but pleasant; his manner easy, but out of place in Sixteenth Street.

Edith jumped to her feet. Instinctively, her nervous hands darted upward to arrange her hair.

"Please don't disturb yourself," said her caller. "I sha'n't keep you ten minutes." He gave her his card.

Edith read that he was Mr Douglas Aspinall, of Lord's Court Building, 27 William Street. In the lower left-hand corner of the card were the words: "Aspinall & Derry, Counsellors-at-Law." She looked up:

"I don't understand——"

It was quite simple, he assured her. He came in person because he had experienced some trouble in finding her address and establishing her identity, but that was the only intricate portion of his task, and it was over. He came to tell her that an annuity—small, but absolutely unconditioned and the best his client could afford—had been settled upon her: "To be paid quarterly in sums aggregating three hundred and sixty-four dollars a year." He was not to tell her the name of her benefactor unless she insisted, but since she did insist, he was at liberty to say that it was James Trent.

For a full minute Edith said nothing. When she did speak, her face was averted.

"So it's Jim," she said.

Koviloor Acadamy
Yes, it was Jim. Though he had married a rich wife, he earned, it appeared, a comfortable competence from his art and he had just sold three pictures for the sum with which he invested in this annuity. What pictures? Mr Aspinall did not see why she should care, but there was no secret about it, it would doubtless soon be published: they were a portrait of Bishop Peel, a picture of some tango dancers that was popular about a year ago—probably she remembered the reproductions, which were everywhere—and a still earlier painting, the picture of a woman in a dressing-gown, called, the lawyer believed——

"I know it," said Edith, shortly; it was that portrait of her, the portrait about which she had been so angry with Jim. Well, she was angry now, but she was glad to have the money—that was salvation—from whatever source—and her only curiosity was as to the price paid for that picture: "What did he get for it?"

Aspinall shook his head at her:

"Don't you think I've already told you more than I ought to?"

She couldn't move him—and, after all, what did she care? "He's still—he's still married? There's no harm in asking that, I guess."

"None whatever. Oh, yes, he's still married! Very happily, I believe. And he has a little son."

She got up and walked across the room, her back toward the lawyer. She stood thus until he was through stating the arrangements for payment and its methods. Then she turned.

"How did you know I was living here? How did he know I needed—needed it?"

But she guessed the reply: there had been that gossip about Mertcheson's death, of course; Jim could not help hearing it; she herself had heard its echoes. And that picture was helping to pay——

She broke out in angry denunciations of Jim. If Aspinall only knew what she knew; if he guessed what sort of a man his client was! This Trent had wrecked her life; he had ruined her; he followed a secret career of debauchery. She spread her old accusations before her visitor before he could raise his voice in protest. She was so skilful in her attack that she even woke temper in the legal mind.

"And he sends you to me now as if I was a beggar!" she ended. "Oh, I'll take your money: you bet I'll take the money! I've earned it. But don't say he sent you because he thought

Koviloor Academy
it'd be 'painful' for me to see him. Of course he did say that: it's so like him. But I know he did it because he wanted to be high-and-mighty. If he didn't want to be high-and-mighty, he wouldn't have missed the pleasure of seeing for himself how hard up I am."

Aspinall's eyes were less pleasant now.

"If you want to know what Mr Trent felt," he replied, "I'll tell you. Although I pointed out to him that you have no claim, either legal or moral, upon him, he said: 'I only wish I could do more for her; I can't bear to think the poor thing might starve.'"

It was wanton repetition of a phrase uttered in confidence; but Aspinall had been too severely tried. Edith recoiled from it. She seemed to see Jim's face again, alight now with a large and patient pity. "I can't bear to think the poor thing might starve!"

He had never meant her to hear that; but he had said it, and she hated him for his compassion. Still, money was money, however little and however derived; once this money was hers, it was nobody's else. . . .

When the lawyer left her, she shook hands with him, for she was grateful for the money. But she hated Jim for this humiliation—how she hated Jim!

§ 5. So, once again, the gypsy lad, Spring, had come running up the streets of New York, behind his harbinger, the hurdy-gurdy, and singing as he ran. The children heard him first and laughed at their play under the budding trees in the public squares. Then even the older people began to give ear to his bragging lies and pay heed to his swaggering promises: often ere now he had tricked them, but they forgot, as he so loftily forgot, how sadly he had deceived the world a year ago, and every year before. Even Mame, to all physical appearance unchanged, marvellously heard him and believed.

"Charley," she said one evening as she casually paused in the hall before starting for her missionary meeting, "it won't make any difference to your life here, and everything'll be as pleasant as it's always been, for we'll all keep right on; but next week I'm going to marry Mr Zoller. Now, be sure you have the shutters shut by ten o'clock, and don't forget the back door: the lock's out of order; use the bolt."

Charley was capable only of a schoolboy wriggling of his shoulders. He had been expecting this. He did not raise his

Koviloor Academy
voice to protest—that voice trembling and uncertain now: he merely waited until she went out and then, coatless, collarless, and unshaven, shuffled away upstairs in his father's carpet-slippers that were too large for him.

Only very deep in his heart did he hear the call of Spring or reckon with the announcement of his sister's approaching wedding. With Zoller permanently quartered in the house, he would be a bit more uncomfortable than he was now, but to all intents and purposes Zoller or at any rate Zoller's orders, had for so long shared the rule there that this new change could hardly count. Charley had been informed that he was to "go along" just as he had been going, and he knew that nothing could set him free. So, when he reached his room, he kicked off his slippers and sat in his stocking feet under the gas-jet, his hair a little thinner, his face a little looser and more bloated, and his eyes a little more like a bullfrog's than they used to be. With a scanty half pint of whisky beside him, some cheap tobacco in a cheap pipe—he could no longer afford even the cheapest cigars—he read the evening newspaper line by line and felt but vaguely the summons of the season.

Then, oddly side by side in the paper, where Fate loves to play in strange juxtapositions and odd contrasts, his glance came upon two brief items of news. One was an account of the work of James Trent; it told how the French Government had bought, for the Luxembourg collection, the portrait of the painter's wife and son; how a church-society had purchased his portrait of Bishop Peel, and presented it to the bishop's wife, and how a millionaire, famous for buying whatever he was told was good, had now paid a large price for the same artist's tango-dancers and that other portrait named simply "A Woman." the second paragraph announced what it called a "Society Engagement" between the daughter of one of the richest men in New York and Robert Tyrrell, of Boston.

For a half hour the lonely Charley sat with those items before his eyes, drinking his bad whisky and smoking his bad tobacco. He was long past swearing at the power which shapes the destinies of men; he was past anything save a mild regret and a sneaking longing and a futile hatred that he knew to be futile. But, fretful and weak as he was, his very hatred of Jim made him now, realising the utter hopelessness of his own wreck, see one thing clearly: he saw clearly that what had happened to him had happened not because he married a divorced woman; what had happened had happened because

Koviloor Academy
he and Edith had cheated at the game and had so made their strongest bond the mutual knowledge of a mutual unworthiness and distrust.

Charley rather thought he would like to tell her of the evening's news. He could hear her saying: "The idea! He sold *that* old thing! I wonder how he could swindle anybody into buying that." It would be a relief to join with her in condemning Jim, even in quarrelling with her again. Besides, he would vaguely like her to know that he felt her no more to blame than he had been. A trifle befuddled by the liquor, for he was now as easily affected by it as in the days when he took his first drink with Jim—the days before the days when he could take so much and show so little—he tiptoed downstairs to the telephone, wondering whether, by searching the directory, he could find the name of any old acquaintance that might know her present address. And, as he reached the hall, the 'phone-bell rang.

He took up the receiver through which Edith had listened to Tyrrell on the morning that Mame came in and caught her. It was as he had almost, for no discernible reason, expected: somewhere, out in the softness of that night in lying spring, Edith had also seen those two pieces of news in the evening paper and was telephoning him.

"Hello!" she said, and he knew her voice.

His heart beat swiftly, but it could never again beat so swiftly as it used to beat.

"Hello!" he whispered, afraid to raise his voice in the house that was Mame's, even when Mame was out of it. "This is Charley."

"This is—this is Edith."

"Yes, I know."

"Are you alone, Charley?"

"Yes, but—but not for long. Mame's at a missionary meeting. She'll be back any minute now."

There was a momentary pause. Then Edith's voice resumed:

"I was just wondering how you were."

"Oh, I'm all right. How about you?"

"No worse off than I'll ever be, I guess." She gave him the address of her lodging-house. "I've been hard up," she said.

"So have I," said Charley. "What have you been doing?"

"Almost nothing. I did try to get a job dancing in a cabaret, but I wasn't good enough."

Koviloor Academy
"Dancing?" He had no hatred of it now; he had no hatred of the other things he had heard of her. "I didn't know you could do it."

"It seems I can't."

"When did you learn?"

"After I left you. How's the invention, Charley?"

He told her of its collapse. "So I'm living on a few dollars a week from Mame," he added.

He heard her gasp.

"So *you're* on her list? I found out to-day that I was, too. She's hunted me up: Zoller says she considers it her Christian duty not to let me starve." Edith's voice was acrid. "A lot of people seem more afraid of me dead than alive. Another one turned up a while ago. Mame's three dollars a week had conditions: I wasn't to see you; the first one hadn't any."

Nowadays Mame led his thoughts:

"Well, *I* can't move hand or foot without Mame's say-so." There were tears of self-pity in his eyes, not so much at the fact as at the telling of it. "And I'm too busted-up and too middle-aged ever to get a job again. Edith"—his voice became insinuating—"do you think you could lend me enough to give me a start in business? A month or so ago I got a great idea, and if I could only get a little capital together—— It'd pay you five per cent. on your investment from the jump."

"Lend you money? I know you too well for that, Charley—and my whole income's ten a week. Seven of it comes from Jim."

"Jim?" he repeated. The receiver shook in his hands. "And he's only giving you——"

"Seven per. Of course he's pretending it's the best he can do. Isn't that like him?"

There was silence.

"I'm sorry for you," Charley said at last.

"And *I'm* sorry for *you*," she returned.

"Did you—did you see to-night's paper, Edith?"

"About Jim?"

"Yes, and about——"

"Oh, I knew about *that* a week ago. You needn't worry; I'll never see *him* again."

"I wasn't worrying about Tyrrell," said Charley; "I was only wondering whether you ever thought how it all happened, of how——"

She interrupted as of old, and her voice was full of hate.

Koviloor Acadamy

"Think of that luck of Jim's. His wife and son, too! Some people have all the luck. But his won't last forever—I'm sure of that. . . . Almost sure. . . . Can't you come 'round to see me sometimes?" she was asking. "I'm not so good to look at as I used to be: I've had some hard luck, and I'm afraid I've been drinking a little lately. Still, for old times' sake——"

She now meant, it was evident, only what she said. Remarriage between paupers, and in the face of the forever disapproving Mame, could never be.

"Oh!" Charley caught his breath. "I'd like to; but if Mame ever found out——"

Edith's voice was softer. "You could sneak 'round once in a while, couldn't you? I'm lonely."

That was it, he knew: she did not love him; her very passion was dead; but she was lonely without the one man left in the world with whom she had something in common, even if that something was only the memory of a mutual and really ineffectual conspiracy.

"I don't understand why *you* should be lonely," he nevertheless said.

"You wouldn't understand, Charley. But I've had to worry, and that leaves its marks. Can't you come 'round? Won't you?" It was not like the manner of the former Edith.

"If Mame found out——"

"She'd stop both our allowances. Yes, I know. But just once in a while, Charley: she'll never get to know."

Charley gulped.

"Well," he said, "I'll try."

He laughed, they both laughed, at the idea of tricking Mame; she was the only person left for them to trick.

"Do!" Edith's voice was almost happy at the prospect. "Do try. If you will only try, you can work it. Nobody need know."

"There was something I wanted to ask you," said Charley. "It was about us—about the reason everything went wrong between us. I——" He groped in his poisoned mind, but the subtlety had escaped him. "I can't think of it now," he said; "but when we have our talk—— O, Edith"—he had heard someone at the front door—"here comes Mame. I've got to ring off, quick!"

"Good-night!" called Edith.

Charley had not the courage to respond to that farewell.

Koviloor Acadamy
He hung up the receiver just in time to face Mame and Zoller, who, as was now his custom, had brought her home.

"I thought I heard you," said Charley, "and I thought I'd just run down——"

Mame sniffed. Standing in the hall beside her grim and dry fiancé, she was a picture of vacuous self-satisfaction.

"Charley," she said, "you've been drinking again."

"No, I haven't, Mame, indeed——"

"Don't lie about it, Charley. I'm ashamed of you. And Mr Zoller here, too! You've forgotten about the shutters—I noticed them as we came by—and I bet you forgot the back door. Go to bed."

He turned meekly and went upstairs, and there, from his own room, he looked out at the stars and the warm, inviting, deceptive spring night.

He thought of Edith. Of course they could never be openly together, and of course when they were secretly together they would often hate each other, and yet—— He wondered why he had gone to the telephone. Had he gone only because he had seen that paragraph in the paper about Tyrrell? No, he knew that, had there been but the mention of Tyrrell, he would not have gone. He went because of that mention of Jim; and that was why Edith had telephoned. They had made Jim serve their turn, and, because of their triumph, Jim, by merely remaining alive and doing his work in the world, had ruined both their lives. He had brought them together; he had driven them apart; he had taken their youth, their hopes, their friends, their means of livelihood; he had made them thieves and left them pensioners; and now it was Jim, honoured and successful, who was once more drawing them together in a furtive and frightful companionship.

§ 6. Downtown, Edith was leaning at her window. The faint breeze of the May night stirred the curtains of her brightly lighted room. The scent of the season rose above the heavy odours of the narrow street below. It floated over the window-sill. Spring, the oldest, the sweetest, and the subtlest of liars, was at the ear of the world once more. It was whispering something. . . .

Edith could not catch the words.

THE END

Koviloor Acadamy

DAUGHTERS OF ISHMAEL

By REGINALD WRIGHT KAUFFMAN

(14th Edition)

With a Preface by JOHN MASEFIELD

Crown 8vo. Cloth. 2/- net (postage 4d.)

"The 'UNCLE TOM'S CABIN' of the White Slave Traffic"

"The kind of book that moves one to action, and may prove . . . the inspiration of a great crusade."—*Morning Post.*

"Vivid, ruthless and relentless; . . . of such immense importance that every grown man and woman should read it."—RICHARD KING, in the *Tatler.*

"Mr Kauffman's handling gives no unnecessary offence."—*Times.*

"It is a book for good men and women to read."
—*Glasgow Courier.*

"The vast majority will be moved into passionate action at a record of terrible human wretchedness."
—*Westminster Gazette.*

"Mr Kauffman has done a real service to humanity."
—CLEMENT SHORTER, in the *Sphere.*

"To read it is a social duty."—W.L.G., in *Vanity Fair.*

"Deadly truthfulness."—*Daily News.*

"At once an uncompromising evangel and artistic triumph."—*Glasgow Herald.*

"To ministers, to teachers and to parents, the work is of the utmost importance."—*Aberdeen Free Press.*

"It is a thoroughly moral book."—*English Review.*

"Horrible, hauntingly painful."—*Daily Telegraph.*

T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., 24 Water Lane, London

Koviloor Acadamy

NOTABLE NEW FICTION.

10s. 6d.

OIL. By Upton Sinclair.
BOSTON. By Upton Sinclair.
LOVE'S PILGRIMAGE. By Upton Sinclair.
CHARLOTTE LOWENSKOLD. By Selma Lagerlöf.

7s. 6d.

POTIPHAR'S WIFE. By Edgar C. Middleton.
THE CONSTANT SIMP. By Nell Martin.
WESTON OF THE ROYAL NORTH-WEST MOUNTED POLICE. By Captain T. Lund.
DAY AND NIGHT. By Guy de Maupassant.
THE MADONNA OF THE SLEEPING CARS. By Maurice Dekobra.
WINGS OF DESIRE. By Maurice Dekobra.
THE PHANTOM GONDOLA. By Maurice Dekobra.
AN EASTERN LOVER. By Joan Conquest.
BEATRICE. A novel. By Arthur Schnitzler.
THE SPY. By Upton Sinclair.
PASS ON. By Florence Lawford.
FREE LOVERS. By R. W. Kauffman.
A PINK 'UN AND A PELICAN—PITCHER IN PARADISE. By Arthur Bindstead.
HOUNDSDITCH DAY BY DAY—GALS' GOSSIP—MORE GALS' GOSSIP—MOP FAIR. By Arthur Binstead.
THE ADVENTURES OF A COQUETTE. By Gaston Leroux.
THE FLOATING PRISON. By Gaston Leroux.
CHERI BIBI AND CECILY. By Gaston Leroux.

6s. 0d.

MR. TEEDLES—THE *GLAND* OLD MAN. By T. le Breton.
RED O' THE FEUD. By Halliwell Sutcliffe.

5s. 0d.

SYLVIA'S MARRIAGE. By Upton Sinclair.
ADVENTURES OF LOUIS BLAKE. By Louis Becke.
NOTES FROM MY SOUTH SEA LOG. By Louis Becke.

T. Werner Laurie Ltd., 24 & 26, Water Lane, E.C.4.

Koviloor Acadamy

LAURIE'S NOTABLE FICTION.

3s. 6d.

OVER LIFE'S EDGE. By VICTORIA CROSS.

2s. 6d.

MRS. MASON'S DAUGHTERS. By M. EIKER.
THE TALE OF A MANOR. By SELMA LAGERLÖF.
FORBIDDEN. By JOAN CONQUEST.
DESERT LOVE. By JOAN CONQUEST.
HAWK OF EGYPT. By JOAN CONQUEST.
PETER MEIKLEJOHN. By C. STEWART BLACK.
ZOE MIDDLEMIST (GOVERNESS). By BRIDGET KENNEDY.
THE GOLDEN CALF. By STEPHEN BLACK.
THE ADVENTURES OF JOHN JOHNS. By FREDERIC CARREL.

2s. 0d.

THE COTTAGE ON THE FELLS. By H. DE VERE STACPOOLE.
DAUGHTERS OF ISHMAEL. By R. W. KAUFFMAN.
WHAT THE BUTLER WINKED AT. By ERIC HORNE.

POPULAR SHILLING LIBRARY.

Picture Covers.

HEY-DAILY-DIDDLE.
THE GATE OF THE EAST. By JOAN CONQUEST.
THE LIGHT IN THE HAREM WINDOW. By JOAN CONQUEST.
DESERT LOVE. By JOAN CONQUEST.
LEONIE OF THE JUNGLE. By JOAN CONQUEST.
HAWK OF EGYPT. By JOAN CONQUEST.
WHAT THE BUTLER WINKED AT. By ERIC HORNE.
THE NIGHTSIDE OF LONDON. By ROBERT MACHRAY.
MY CONFESSIONS. By M. N. NEWTON.
THIRTY YEARS AT BOW STREET. By W. T. EWEN.
CAN YOU ANSWER THIS ONE? By A. C. ASHMORE.
BEAUTY SECRETS. By S. D. JOUHAR.

T. WERNER LAURIE LTD., 24 & 26, Water Lane, E.C.4.

Koviloor Acadamy

NOTABLE BOOKS.

BY H. DENNIS BRADLEY.

The sales of Mr. Bradley's books amount to over 150,000 *copies.*

THE NATURAL STATE. Crown 8vo. 7s. 6d. net.

NOT FOR FOOLS AND ADAM AND EVE. 2s. 6d. net.

THE WISDOM OF THE GODS. 7s. 6d. net.

TOWARDS THE STARS. 3s. 6d. net.

THE ETERNAL MASQUERADE. 3s. 6d. net.

BY GLADYS DAVIDSON.

STORIES FROM THE OPERAS. Illustrated. 8s. 6d. net; leather 15s.

MORE STORIES FROM THE OPERAS. Illustrated. 8s. 6d. net; leather 15s.

STORIES FROM THE RUSSIAN OPERAS. Illustrated. 7s. 6d. net.

PEDIGREE DOGS as recognised by the Kennel Club. Edited by C. C. Sanderson. Introduction by Professor Frederick Hobday. With 143 Illustrations. 21s. net.

FUNERAL CUSTOMS: Their Origin and Development. By Bertram Puckle. Fully Illustrated. Cloth. 16s. net.

IDIOT MAN; Or, The Follies of Mankind. By Professor Charles Richet. 7s. 6d. net. (Nobel Prize Winner.)

THE ART OF THINKING. By T. Sharper Knowlson. 52nd thousand. 2s. 6d. net.

THE KILMARNOCK EDITION OF THE POEMS OF ROBERT BURNS. Enveloped. (Facsimile Edition.) 7s. 6d. net.

BIOGRAPHY FOR BEGINNERS. Words by E. C. Bentley. Pictures by G. K. Chesterton. 6s. net.

T. Werner Laurie Ltd., 24 & 26, Water Lane, E.C.4.

Koviloor Acadamy